

2015

# Unacknowledged Victims: Love between Women in the Narrative of the Holocaust. An Analysis of Memoirs, Novels, Film and Public Memorials

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Unacknowledged Victims: Love between Women in the Narrative of the Holocaust.  
An Analysis of Memoirs, Novels, Film and Public Memorials

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Comparative Literature

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2015

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## **Dedication**

Without Megan M. Howard this dissertation wouldn't have made it out of the petri dish. Words will never be enough to express how I feel. Thank you for the love, care and compassion you showed me. And above all – for always being you... (Because perfect is boring!).

*“Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.”* (Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban)

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank first and foremost my dissertation committee for their willingness to work with me and support my research: Agnes Mueller for her candid feedback; Yvonne Ivory for smoothing out rough edges; Federica Clementi for the enthusiasm for my project; and Laura Woliver for her willingness to help out.

I'm thankful for the generous support and funding provided by the Department of Literatures, Languages, & Cultures at USC. Travel Grants and the Carroll T. and Edward B. Cantey Jr. Bicentennial Fellowship in Liberal Arts allowed me to conduct research in Germany in 2014. In Germany the staff of Ravensbrück concentration camp, the Jugendlager Uckermark, at the Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs- und Informationszentrum e.V. Berlin (FFBIZ) and at ausZeiten e.V. Bochum provided invaluable help. Rita Kronauer and Elmas Pehlivan at ausZeiten e.V. Bochum deserve special mention – and thanks! – for patiently answering my many questions, gathering information, and providing me with contacts at other archives (and for an endless supply of tea and cookies!). Much of what I could draw on later in my writing would have been impossible without them.

Apart from the academic support I received I am immensely grateful for the many people who cared, listened, worried and believed in me when times were rough. Without the help of some very special people I wouldn't have made it this far. Megan Howard, Eric Williams, Mary Hicks, Deborah Zippel, Maggie Johnson, Henning & Angela Liese, Karin Tonkin: THANK YOU!

Last but not least thank you to my parents for their support – after 25 years in school I'm finally graduating!

And finally, though they can't possibly know how much of a help they have been, thank you to my four-legged friends Socrates and Luke Skywalker, who were loving companions and forcefully reminded me regularly that playing and cat cuddling are just as important as writing.

## Abstract

This dissertation combines cultural theory and gender theory with literary criticism to evaluate the treatment of lesbians during the Holocaust and in narratives about the Holocaust. Responding to the kissing-scene controversy of the Berlin memorial for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust I claim that lesbian women's experience of suffering is downplayed and disappears under the umbrella term 'homosexuals.' Employing a critical historical conceptualization of "lesbian love," I consider examples from Claudia Schoppmann's *Days of Masquerade* and *Verbotene Verhältnisse* as well as the personal estate of political activist Hilde Radusch to trace the personal view lesbians have of themselves. Shifting focus onto lesbian suffering in Erica Fischer's *Aimée & Jaguar* and Alexandra von Grote's *Novembermond*, I specifically argue that narratives with lesbian love stories set during the Holocaust only work in the context of one partner being Jewish. Religious persecution and discrimination based on sexual identity are conflated to overshadow each other: a reading as either Jewish or lesbian suffering is rejected in favor of the novelty of a lesbian love story. Employing critical conceptualizations of "identity" and "memory" I further develop the idea of what the representation or misrepresentation of lesbian persecution during the Holocaust means for a shared identity and collective memory of a German lesbian community today.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Gestapo.....Secret State Police

HJ.....Hitler Youth

KPD.....German Communist Party

NS.....National Socialist

NSDAP.....National Socialist German Workers Party

SPD.....German Socialist Party

## **Introduction**

Thoughts about the representation of homosexual victims of the Nazi regime through memorials were the starting point of the initial project from which this dissertation derived. More specifically, this project was sparked by the debates about a kiss and the words that should be engraved on the Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under Nazism in Berlin, Germany. The criteria outlined by the German Bundestag showed a three-fold goal that the monument was supposed to achieve. First, it was directed at the past to memorialize homosexual victims of the Nazi era. Simultaneously, however, it was also to be seen as a symbol of support and acceptance of homosexuality in the present by condemning any intolerance, hostility or marginalization against them. Lastly, the monument is to facilitate a sense of pride in homosexuals and the diversity of their history.<sup>1</sup> Based on this Call for proposals, the winning submission was presented to the public on the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in January 2006. It envisioned a large, black cube with a peephole through which a screen could be viewed that showed an infinite loop of two men kissing each other. The jury mentioned in its explanation of the winning project: “The very sophisticated and confident sculpture very openly takes up the theme of the Holocaust monument by Richard Eisenman” and by showing two men kissing the artists manage “without verbal or written explanation [...] to address the topic of homosexuality

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<sup>1</sup> Full text at [http://www.gedenkort.de/files/GedO\\_Auslobung\\_dt\\_engl.pdf](http://www.gedenkort.de/files/GedO_Auslobung_dt_engl.pdf).

straightforwardly yet subtly” (Initiative der Homosexuellen NS-Opfer Gedenken).<sup>2</sup> The design itself and the rationale of the jury set in motion a process of heated debates regarding the successful implementation of the proposal’s goals as well as a problematic comparison and contrasting between Jewish and homosexual victims of the Holocaust. Probably the harshest critique, however, was directed at the discrepancy of a monument for *gay and lesbian homosexual victims* of the Holocaust that completely erased the existence of lesbians.

The complete debate is well documented online, so I will not recount the broad set of difficulties that arose between the first idea for a memorial in 2003 and the unveiling of the final product in 2008.<sup>3</sup> The central point of the controversy, however, stands in direct relation to the explanation of the jury for choosing the project, which mentions the kiss of two men as representing homosexual victims subtly yet confidently. It is worth mentioning here that the term ‘homosexual’ by definition includes men and women. A German dictionary entry defines homosexuality as behavior and emotions of men or women towards their own gender.<sup>4</sup> The reasoning of the jury is therefore hard to comprehend when the initial proposal called for a symbol of persecution that would facilitate a sense of pride in *all* homosexuals. In essence, while organizations serving homosexual men argued that only they were persecuted and the memorial represented

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<sup>2</sup> “[Die] sehr klar durchdachte und selbstbewußt auftretende Skulptur nimmt ganz offensichtlich Bezug auf die Stelen des Holocaust Denkmals von Richard Eisenman”. “[o]hne verbale Hilfestellungen oder schriftliche Erklärungen [...] das Thema der Homosexualität direkt und doch subtil [vorzustellen]”.

<sup>3</sup> Detailed information and further links can be found in “Das Denkmal für die Homosexuellen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in der Diskussion.” *Gedenkort für die im Nationalsozialismus Verfolgten Homosexuellen*. LSVD, 2006. Web. 22 Dec. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Der Duden: “Homosexualität”.

this accurately, lesbian organizations insisted that homosexual women had been persecuted as well and weren't included in the memorial. As a direct consequence of the heated debate about the memorial in Berlin, a workshop was organized at the concentration camp in Ravensbrück in 2010, addressing problems of memorialization and remembrance. The biggest concentration camp almost exclusively used to incarcerate women and children, Ravensbrück is of significance especially because most of the women sent there were categorized as 'asocial,' the classification assigned to many lesbian women. This workshop as well as the resulting book *Homophobie und Devianz* is evidence of the continuing struggle for recognition of lesbian persecution and deconstruction of the category 'homosexual.' The main question central for promoting the undertaking of this study came as a result of the erasure of lesbian existence from the memorial for *homosexual* victims. In choosing this particular memorial, did the jury forget or deny lesbian victims?

The debate around lesbian representation in the Berlin memorial throws up a larger question about the status of lesbian holocaust victims. This dissertation will explore the status, focusing on how lesbians have been included in and excluded from the narrative of the Holocaust; how inclusion and exclusion has played out in representations of the Holocaust, and what that treatment has meant for lesbian identity in Germany. I approach these questions not from a historian's point of view but from the position of a comparative literature scholar researching the discursive representation of a phenomenon. While I do take the historicity of the problem into consideration I concentrate on the literary representation. Against the backdrop of Holocaust studies, however, I suggest a conceptual change of definition. Instead of defining lesbian women as 'lesbian victims of

the Holocaust' I propose it will be more beneficial for addressing the (in)visibility of lesbian women to think of them as 'the lesbian women among the victims of National Socialism.' This opens up the categories used by the Nazis, offering a possibility to analyze aspects such as sexual orientation that permeate these boundaries.

This dissertation thus focuses on the representation of lesbian love in the narrative of the Holocaust. What aspects of lesbian identity are represented, how, and to what end? Based on arguments juxtaposing lesbian *discrimination* versus lesbian *persecution* I have analyzed the material in terms of how these two concepts are embodied. The fundamental change of including psychological tormenting in the contemporary definition of persecution as outlined by the United Nations, is a major factor in my analysis. My intention was not to settle the argument but rather to show how lesbian love during the Holocaust is (mis-)remembered and what implications can be derived from it. The mechanisms of Nazi persecution directed at lesbians were mainly grounded in psychological terror and torment. Fear of attracting attention by falling outside the prescribed norm silenced lesbian women and drove them into invisibility. My central thesis is that lesbian women's experience of this persecution is downplayed and disappears under the umbrella term 'homosexuals' with tangible consequences in the lack of collective identity that are still palpable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The repercussions of silencing through psychological pressures as exerted on lesbians by National Socialists lasted long into the 1970s, leaving a gap of apparent nonexistence.

To be able to write about a topic that is separated from the 21<sup>st</sup> century by seventy years one must clarify differences in the understanding of terminology and ideas between 'then' and 'now.'

As Ferdinand de Saussure explained in *Course in General Linguistics*, human beings strive to create meaning through interpretation of ‘signs.’ De Saussure’s concept relies on the *signifier*, which is the form that the sign takes. For the purpose of this dissertation the signifier(s) could be the terms ‘lesbian’ or ‘persecution.’ The *signified* is the concept that is represented by the sign. For the signifier ‘lesbian’ the signified would be the concept of women loving women. Only when there is an association between the ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’ is meaning created and a ‘sign’ developed that has universal meaning for the members of one specific group who interpret the signified similarly (cf. Saussure 67). If the concept – the signified – changes, the sign necessarily changes as well. In some cases the sign, signified, and signifier have changed since the 1930s. What the sign ‘lesbian’ means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not the same as the understanding during the Third Reich, creating a problem for identifying the subject one wants to analyze. Being mindful of linguistic changes and limitations will also possibly help understand rationalizations in the debates about lesbian victims of and persecution of lesbian women under National Socialism. It is therefore essential to examine what is meant when writing about ‘women loving women.’ Scholars in Women’s and Gender studies have challenged and changed the meaning of what it means to be female, what it means to be ‘a woman.’ In addition, delineation between the understanding of romantic love versus sexual intercourse or brotherly love/friendship (*philia*) needs to be explored at least partially.

I have dedicated my first chapter to establishing (1) the definition and meaning of discrimination versus persecution as it was understood during the Nazi era and as it is understood today, (2) distinguishing between terms used by women-loving-women



during the Nazi era to describe themselves and those used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,<sup>5</sup> (3) to investigating the triad of heterosexuality – homosexuality – bisexuality and (4) to explicating the sexual policies of the National Socialists and their perception of women.<sup>6</sup>

In the second chapter I move on to write about memory and identity as they pertain to a collective, and especially the way memory is influenced by trauma. I strive to answer the following questions in this chapter: What can be remembered and how is trauma significant in the process of remembering? What influence does the way of remembering have on the formation of a collective identity for the following generation? Is there a specific female way of remembering trauma and dealing with it? If so, what implications does that have for the way lesbian victims of the Holocaust are (not) remembered?

The third chapter is an analysis of the historical parts of the material I have gathered. I begin with the personal estate of German political activist and lesbian Hilde Radusch, who was persecuted by the Nazis, and move on to evaluate the hybrid text *Verbotene Verhältnisse* by Claudia Schoppmann, in which she uses authentic court files

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<sup>5</sup> In an fortunate turn of events, as I was about to turn in the manuscript new material came to light that I would have liked to include in the study. The transcript of a 2011 radio talk show, interviews several women-loving women who lived in Nazi Germany during the 1930s. References to the use of the term ‘lesbian’ and treatment of lesbians by women in their 90s who even now want to remain anonymous, would have supported/broadened my thesis and shown how survivors think/thought about their gender identity and the repercussions of living invisible lives. I have opted to insert footnotes in relevant places to highlight that this material is available and significant for further study.

<sup>6</sup> One reason for this necessity is the pro and contra arguments used by historians to justify their position regarding the in-/exclusion of lesbians from the Holocaust narrative. Another one derives from my analysis of the material for which I have to build a framework of reference and classification.

to reconstruct legal cases against women accused of being lesbians in Austria between 1933-1945. In this chapter I limit my inquiry to the historical portion of Schoppmann's text, in the following chapter I then analyze its fictional elements. Furthermore, I evaluate the documentary novel *Aimée & Jaguar* by Erica Fischer. My emphasis in this chapter is the way lesbian women described themselves and their persecution during the Nazi era in order to have a basis for the next chapter, which deals with the fictionalized representation of their lives and persecution.

As mentioned above, my fourth chapter deals with the fictional accounts of Claudia Schoppmann's *Verbotene Verhältnisse* and moves on to the movie *Aimée & Jaguar* that is based on Erica Fischer's book analyzed in the previous chapter. The last, and purely fictional, movie in this chapter is Alexandra von Grote's *Novembermond*. Especially interesting for this chapter is the question of what happens with the love story between the two women. Who are they, how are they portrayed and what does their portrayal do for the interpretation of the characters as lesbians?

In the fifth chapter I analyze the commemoration of lesbian persecution after 1945, specifically starting with the dedication of the first official memorials for homosexual victims of the Holocaust. I have chosen the memorials in Frankfurt, dedicated in 1994, Cologne (dedicated 1995) and Berlin (2008) to trace changes and similarities in the representation as well as difficulties that arose during the process of erecting the memorials. An analysis of location, design and inscription were my guide to parsing out how lesbian persecution is remembered as well as to how it is represented in the memorial.

The sixth and final chapter is my conclusion, summarizing my findings and answering the question of how lesbian love is represented in the gender(ed) narrative of the Holocaust. I argue that lesbian identity disappears behind other categories, such as Jewishness or political affiliation, making lesbian persecution invisible and thus impossible to represent. Trying to shift the direction of the discourse, I propose a change in meaning to view lesbian victims of the Holocaust as a subgroup within a larger group: lesbian women among the victims of the Holocaust.

## **Chapter 1 – Terminology**

In this chapter I analyze different definitions and concepts in the 1930s and the 21st century in order to clarify what I am examining in this study. The changes in meanings of discrimination and persecution are imperative for understanding contemporary debates about inclusion/exclusion of lesbians in remembering the Holocaust. Equally essential is the following discussion of what as and is understood as lesbian, lesbian behavior or lesbian sexual orientation. Building on that I then lay out what National Socialists sexual policies reveal about the Nazi perception and treatment of women in general, since large portions of measures against lesbians are rooted in it. In my last step I bring all of the previous sections together and talk about lesbian victims of the Holocaust.

### **1.1 Discrimination versus Persecution**

In the discourse for or against an inclusion of lesbians – or, more specifically, an explicit inclusion of the word ‘lesbians’ instead of the collective ‘homosexuals’ – as recognized victims of the Holocaust, two other terms need to be discussed to understand the viewpoints of the quarreling parties. The differentiation between the terms ‘Discrimination’ (Diskriminierung) and ‘Persecution’ (Verfolgung) is vital to an understanding of the different perceptions and, moreover, the consequences for commemoration of Holocaust victims. Following are examples from various letters, statements and articles dealing with the ‘HomoMonument’ in Berlin and persecution of

lesbian women during the Holocaust in general. An open letter by VEHN (Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Homosexuellen in Niedersachsen e.V.<sup>1</sup>) to the German Minister of State from 2010 regarding the call for submissions of same-sex kissing scenes for the memorial to homosexual victims of the Holocaust reads

It cannot be historically verified that lesbian women were subject of individual persecution during National Socialism based on their sexual orientation. [...] Of a different quality was the individual persecution and deportation to concentration camps that millions of people had to endure.<sup>23</sup>

Ilse Kokula states that “In the patriarchal society of the National Socialists lesbian women were not persecuted with the same severity and systematic as gay men. [...] Contempt and denigration, however, struck homosexual women and men alike” (Senatsverwaltung fuer Bildung, Jugend und Sport 5). In an article about ways of remembering lesbian women during National Socialism Sabine Schrader writes

Lesbian women are subjected to a two-fold discrimination in a patriarchal system, first in their exclusion from official life because of their gender and then for rejecting the natural role of women, to be fertile, and to reproduce. [...] The only thing we can be sure of is that there was no systematic persecution.<sup>4</sup> (Schrader 33–34)

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<sup>1</sup> VEHN is an organization dedicated to researching the history of homosexuals in Lower Saxony.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted all translations were done by me. The original German quotes are included in the footnotes.

<sup>3</sup> “Es ist historisch nicht zu belegen, dass lesbische Frauen im Nationalsozialismus individueller Verfolgung aufgrund ihrer sexuellen Orientierung ausgesetzt gewesen seien. [...] Eine ganz andere Qualität hatte die individuelle Verfolgung und Verschleppung in Konzentrationslager, der Millionen Menschen ausgesetzt waren”.

<sup>4</sup> “Lesbische Frauen unterliegen in einem patriarchalen System einer zweifachen Diskriminierung, zum einen in ihrem Ausschluss aus dem öffentlichen Leben qua Geschlecht, zum anderen in ihrem Verstoß gegen die natürliche Bestimmung der Frau, ihrer Fruchtbarkeit und Reproduktion. [...] Sicher ist nur, daß es keine systematische Verfolgung gab”.

Likewise, German historian Claudia Schoppmann notes that the “situation of lesbian women in the ‘Third Reich’ can only partly be described in terms of clear-cut criteria of persecution” (Grau and Schoppmann 8).<sup>5</sup>

What becomes clear as one delves deeper into the topic is a differentiation between lesbian and gay victims. ‘Discrimination’ appears to be the favored term for the description of treatment of lesbian women while ‘persecution’ is used in conjunction with gay men. A short comparison between definitions of both terms in selected dictionaries yields the conclusion that there is a hierarchy of suffering between persecution and discrimination. The main difference between the entries should be understood as the intent to kill someone (persecution) as opposed to harassing someone without any lethal methods (discrimination).<sup>6</sup> In contrast to definitions given in dictionaries, the United

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<sup>5</sup> Only one article by in the *TAZ* from 1992 utilized the term ‘Verfolgung’ a few dozen times (Mittag).

<sup>6</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “discrimination” as “the practice of unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people”. In the body of the main entry this is broken down further into the “act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually” and a “prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment”. The latter is accompanied by the reference to racial discrimination. The entry for “persecution” in the same dictionary reads as follows: “the act or practice of persecuting especially those who differ in origin, religion, or social outlook; the condition of being persecuted, harassed, or annoyed”. A further survey to how the verb is defined reveals the information that to persecute someone means to “to treat (someone) cruelly or unfairly especially because of race or religious or political beliefs” and by a lesser extent to “constantly annoy or bother (someone)”. The Oxford English Dictionary gives more detailed entries. Discrimination is here delineated as the “making of distinctions prejudicial to people of a different race or colour from oneself; racial discrimination” and to persecute means “to pursue, follow with hostility or malignity [...] to pursue, chase, hunt, drive (with missiles, or with attempts to catch, kill or injure) [...] to pursue with malignancy or enmity and injurious action; esp. to oppress with pains and penalties for the holding of a belief or opinion held to be injurious or heretical”. Persecution itself is defined as “infliction of death, torture, or penalties for adherence to a religious belief or an opinion as such, with a view to the repression or extirpation of it” (Simpson and Weiner).

Nation's understanding of persecution and discrimination is interesting to look at because it applies to refugees and grew out of the atrocities of the Nazis in 1951. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees published an updated document in 1992 that sheds light on the divergent perception of the two terms:

51. There is no universally accepted definition of "persecution", and various attempts to formulate such a definition have met with little success. From Article 33 of the 1951 Convention, it may be inferred that a threat to *life or freedom* on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group is always persecution. Other serious violations of human rights – for the same reasons – would also constitute persecution. [...]

54. Differences in the treatment of various groups do indeed exist to a greater or lesser extent in many societies. Persons who receive less favourable treatment as a result of such differences are not necessarily victims of persecution. It is only in certain circumstances that discrimination will amount to persecution. This would be so if measures of discrimination lead to consequences of a substantially prejudicial nature for the person concerned, e.g. *serious restrictions* on his right to earn his livelihood, his right to practice his religion, or his access to normally available educational facilities. (Moussalli, emphasis added)

It should be self-evident that one cannot deny the separate nature of what it means to be discriminated against as opposed to being persecuted. A threat to life and freedom is essential to the meaning of persecution; discrimination, on the other hand, is understood as the less favorable treatment of an individual or group. When we apply this understanding of the two terms to how the Nazis treated homosexual women and men two things become clear. The first is that with §175 male homosexuals were singled out and targeted officially as enemies of the Reich.<sup>7</sup> They were discriminated against as well

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<sup>7</sup> The complete text of §175 after the Nazis reformed it in 1935 reads: "A male who commits a sex offense with another male or allows himself to be used by another male for a sex offense shall be punished with imprisonment. Where a party was not yet twenty-one years of age at the time of the act, the court may in especially minor cases refrain from punishment" (Halsall). The addendum §175a lists punishments and the various ways in which this sexual offense could take place: "Penal servitude up to 10 years or, where

as persecuted and – maybe most importantly – incarcerated in concentration camps. The law put into place demanded “penal servitude up to 10 years or, where there are mitigating circumstances, imprisonment of not less than three months” (Halsall) for any homosexual act committed by men. Secondly, if one looks at the wording of §175, women were notably excluded from it. Although there had been efforts by various persons to create a similar law for lesbian women, these efforts never made it into the legal code. It can be speculated that based on the view the German leadership had on differences between the sexes that they singled out male homosexuals as the destroyer of German blood whereas women were not seen as valuable enough to warrant mention. Furthermore, homosexuality was feared to spread like a disease if contact between homosexuals and heterosexuals was allowed. This fear accounts for the separate cellblocks and camp blocks that have been reported by male homosexual prisoners. If one takes the theory of homosexuality as a disease one step further the fear of the Nazi leadership was a loss of ‘good’ German blood by young men being recruited by gays and infected with homosexuality. Lesbian love, on the other hand, was not only less visible – affectionate acts between women were considered part of the feminine nature – but also to some extent viewed as less dangerous. This did not, however, constitute more acceptance on the part of the Nazis. Lesbian women still subverted the heteronormative

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there are mitigating circumstances, imprisonment of not less than three months shall apply to: (1) a male who, with violence or the threat of violence to body and soul or life, compels another male to commit a sex offense with him or to allow himself to be abused for a sex offense; (2) a male who, by abusing a relationship of dependence based upon service, employment or subordination, induces another male to commit a sex offense with him or to allow himself to be abused for a sex offense; (3) a male over 21 years of age who seduces a male person under twenty-one years to commit a sex offense with him or to allow himself to be abused for a sex offense; (4) a male who publicly commits a sex offense with males or allows himself to be abused by males for a sex offense or offers himself for the same” (Halsall).



gender stereotype but, unlike gay men, their sexuality never became an issue of importance. They were persecuted and discriminated against but differently and with different outcomes.

Nazi policies and their perception of women make it clear that women were only the vessel for the German seed with the man providing the essential ‘German blood’ and value. As Gabriele Mittag reports in a newspaper article:

Female homosexuality was effectively ‘unthinkable’ for the Nazis or only conceivable as ‘pseudo homosexuality’, as the result of ‘seduction’ and not a catastrophe regarding demographic development since women were still ‘usable’ [...] meaning that they were always ready for sexual intercourse.<sup>8</sup> (Mittag)

One cannot forget, however, that in Austria a law similar to §175 existed for lesbian women between 1852 and 1971. Paragraph 129Ib applied to women as well as men: “Punishable as criminal acts are also the following acts of sodomy: 1. Sodomy against nature, which is [...] b) with persons of the same sex” (DöW).<sup>9</sup> Since the law does not specify the biological sex of the person committing the offense, the National Socialists kept the law in place after the annexation of Austria and applied it to both men and women. Historian Claudia Schoppmann, who used archival records of court documents from 1938-1945 that had survived the war and had not been destroyed afterwards to piece together stories of persecution against lesbian women, expresses in her book *Verbotene Verhältnisse* that between 1938 and 1943 66 women had been prosecuted in Vienna

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<sup>8</sup> “Weibliche Homosexualität war für die Nazis im Grund ‘undenkbar’ oder nur als ‘Pseudohomosexualität’ vorstellbar, als Ergebnis einer ‘Verführung’ und bevölkerungspolitisch keine Katastrophe, da die Frau ‘nach wie vor nutzbar’, [...] d.h. immer ‘geschlechtsbereit’ sei”.

<sup>9</sup> “Als Verbrechen werden auch nachstehende Arten der Unzucht bestraft: 1. Unzucht wider die Natur, das ist [...] b) mit Personen desselben Geschlechtes”.

based on §129Ib. While this number is much lower than those of men prosecuted based on either §175 or §129Ib, it nevertheless goes to show that a systematic discrimination and persecution of lesbian women did take place. Why only very little research has been and is being done on the topic – with the exception of lesbian and homosexual organizations – may be explained by reasoning that “the topic is still one considered ‘dubious’ if not abominable” (Mittag).<sup>10</sup> With LGBT history having become a serious subject with active research in the past twenty years, however, Mittag’s explanation is not adequate anymore. I leave the specifics of analyzing the mechanisms behind this phenomenon to other scholars, noting here only that there is a discrepancy.

From a purely pragmatic standpoint the persecution of male homosexuals was a necessity for the Nazis. Focused on population growth, every male homosexual counted as the loss of a potential genitor; leaving homosexuals free to do as they wished would lead to seduction of susceptible German youth (cf. Grau 31). With the rigorous separation of men and women into their respective organizations, the prejudice of gays seducing the youth may have been valid for youngsters in the Hitler Jugend (HJ), where male-male bonding was encouraged and pubescent hormonal outbursts could lead to experimentation, but is unjustified for adults. One rationale that drove the National Socialists to the extreme measure of trying to eradicate homosexuals is deeply embedded in the ideology of Nationalism. The ideology of modern nationalism is tied to the idea of respectability, meaning ‘decent’ or ‘correct’ manners, morals, and most of all sexuality. George L. Mosse, in analyzing the relationship between nationalism, respectability, and sexuality, writes in *Nationalism & Sexuality*:

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<sup>10</sup> “der Gegenstand immer noch als ‘unseriös’, wenn nicht sogar ‘anrühig’ gilt”.

Analyzing the relationship between nationalism and respectability involves tracing the development of some of the most important norms that have informed our society: ideals of manliness [...], and their effect on the place of women; and insiders who accepted the norms, as compared to the outsiders, those considered abnormal or diseased. (Mosse 1)

The patriarchal hierarchy of the National Socialists saw women first and foremost as mothers and wives. They served as the helper for men while men actively engaged in moving the nation into the future. In the disorder of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this future was envisioned with stability and respectability in mind. The division of labor between the sexes ensured a certain set of rigid standards, which mimicked stability by guaranteeing a stable and settled family life. It can be argued that abnormal or deviant sexuality jeopardized the stability of the male-female nuclear family, thus making it a threat to society. Respectability was the nationalists' way of maintaining a division of labor and therefore a future for the German Volk. Respectability, 'correct' and 'decent' manners and morals, were concerned with popular attitudes towards sexuality and sexual behavior. "Respectability came to rule behavior patterns [...], and was based on a consistent attitude toward the human body, its sensuous qualities and its sexual functions" (Mosse 5). 'Decent' and 'correct' behavior patterns, then, arose from the most important ideals of Pietism and Evangelicalism: Modesty, sexual purity, virtue, among others (cf. Shantz 310ff.). A determination to restrain sexual passion and behavior arose from these values, marking sexuality as a procreation necessity. With that, differentiation between deviant and normal sexuality could be based not on 'correct' behavior but its result for the Volk. One doctor said about homosexuals "the secrecy that accompanie[s] deviant sexuality resemble[s] a conspiracy sowing hatred against the state; men and women who practice such vices lack either moral sense or civic responsibility" (Mosse

29). The aforementioned threat to the stability of society can consequently be understood as a driving force behind the Nazi persecution of homosexuals.

The other very important idea stemming from the ideology of nationalism is the



Figure 1.1: The ‘pure Aryan’ Family, 1938

"Propaganda Artifacts Gallery." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Ed. Cortina Productions. United States Holocaust Memorial Council, n.d. Web. 17 Jan. 2015.

ideal of manliness mentioned before. It, too, was central to the self-definition of the National Socialist state, with images of the Nordic, blonde Aryans perpetually published in NSDAP propaganda material. Figure 1.1 shows a calendar cover from 1938 published by the arms policy department of the NSDAP. The Aryan ideal of manliness is depicted alongside a woman and child. Blonde, muscular, tanned and towering over the female the man’s image evokes a sense of him as a protector and defender of the family. He symbolizes the strength of body and mind while the blonde female, garbed in white and

cradling an infant, embodies purity and virtue. She sits in between his legs, giving her an

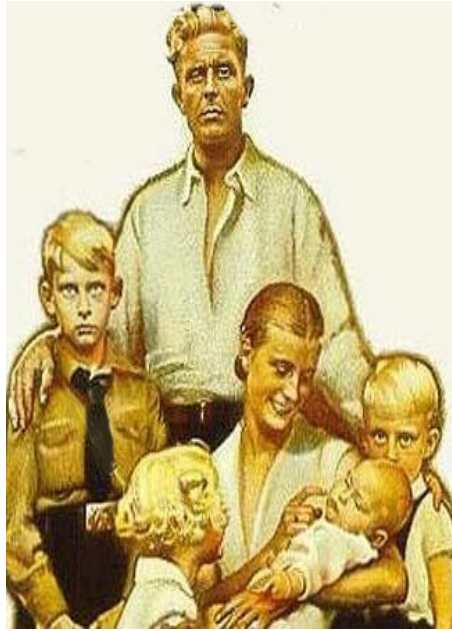


Figure 1.2: The Aryan Family. Representation in a poster for the Winterhilfswerk. Stegemann, Wolf. “Das Winterhilfswerk – Spenden für den Staat, die Armen und für die Frierenden Soldaten im Osten.” *Dorsten unterm Hakenkreuz*. Wolf Stegemann, 28 May 2012. Web. 20 Dec. 2014.

aura of modesty and subservience. Another image (Figure 1.2) found in the publications by official National Socialist sources is a depiction of the ideal Aryan family. Again, all members of the family have blonde hair and are impeccably dressed. The father acts as the protector by placing his hands on the shoulders of his sons. He is the center of the image and towers over the rest of his family. All three male members of the family are drawn looking directly at the audience while the mother holds an infant and her daughter stands with her back towards the onlooker. Neither of them makes eye contact, instead looking demurely towards the infant. The clear masculine-feminine role distinctions and the division of labor seen in this image illustrate the Nazi idea of an ideal Aryan family. With four children, the woman has reached the minimum number of children to receive a Mother's Cross. The manliness that National Socialists endeavored to reach was

“invoked to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, which threatened the clear distinction between what was considered normal and abnormality”.

Furthermore, as is evident in the images, “manliness symbolized the nation’s spiritual and material vitality. It called for strength of body and mind, but not brute force – the individual’s energies had to be kept under control” (Mosse 23). Modeled after the Greek idea of male beauty, the Aryan man was supposed to show proper physical proportions and exude an air of transcendent beauty. Masculinity meant offering stability in the home, creating order, keeping the body fit and healthy. The Nazi’s efforts in the Hitler Youth to form young boys in this image are evidence for the control and oppression that that the regime exhibited. Homosexuals, then, undermined the efforts of nationalism to keep order and balance by what was perceived as sexual laxity and through deterioration of the masculine ideal. They were seen as nervous and unstable individuals, prone to masturbation and with distorted physiognomy that showed degeneracy of mental capacities (cf. 31). Fear of being seduced to the degenerate lifestyle and feeling threatened by emasculation hence also fueled the agenda of the Nazis.

Nevertheless, one cannot assume that the National Socialists frowned upon all sex equally. As Dagmar Herzog remarks in her book *Sex after Fascism* “that all the manifestly brutal aspects of Nazi sexual policies were not embedded in a broader antisexual attitude, but, rather, coexisted with injunctions and encouragements to the majority of Germans to seek and experience sexual pleasure” (Herzog 11). Repressive acts were first and foremost directed at those who evoked anxiety and fear, be that on the level of sexuality or race. The same rhetoric that was used to demonize abnormal sexualities was also employed to villainize the Jews whose ‘degeneracy’ was understood

as a natural trait of Jewish men. The idea that “Jewish men differ from non-Jewish men by being delicate, meek, or effeminate in body and character runs deep in European history” (Lerner et al. 2-4). Elemental in this approach and explanatory for the existential Nazi angst of homosexuals is the duality that is inherent in both Jewish males and homosexuals. People with the religious identity “Jewish” also had a national identity, “German”. Likewise, homosexuals had their sexual identity deviant from the heterosexual norm but nonetheless identified as German nationals. Thus their expression of masculinity was just as German as the ideal masculinity propagated by the National Socialists. The following quote from an NSDAP functionary illustrates how fluidly the transition from one victim group to another can be made as well as how fearful the Nazi ideology was of emasculation:

‘Suprema lex salus populi!’ Service before Self! It is not necessary that you and I live, but it is necessary that the German people lives. And it can live only if it has the will to struggle – for to live is to struggle. And it can struggle only if it remains virile [mannbar]. But it is virile only if it exercises discipline, particularly in sexual matters. Free love is undisciplined and unbridled. That is why we reject it, as we reject everything that is of harm to the people. Anyone who aims at male-male or female-female sex is our enemy. We reject everything that emasculates our people and puts it at the mercy of its enemies [...]. The stronger are right. And the stronger will always assert themselves against the weaker. Today we are the weaker ones. Let us make sure that we again become the stronger! We can do that only if we exercise discipline [Zucht]. We therefore reject any sexual deviation [Unzucht], particularly between man and man, because it robs us of the last possibility of freeing our people from the slave-chains in which it is now forced to toil.<sup>11</sup> (Grau and Schoppmann 25)

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<sup>11</sup> “‘Suprema lex salus populi!’ Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz! Nicht nötig ist es, daß Du und ich leben, aber nötig ist es, daß das deutsche Volk lebt. Und leben kann es nur, wenn es kämpfen will, denn leben heißt kämpfen. Und kämpfen kann es nur, wenn es sich mannbar hält. Mannbar ist es aber nur, wenn es Zucht übt, vor allem in der Liebe. Unüchtig ist: Freie Liebe und zügellos. Darum lehnen wir sie ab, wie wir alles ablehnen, was zum Schaden des Volkes ist. Wer gar an Mann-männliche und Weib-weibliche Liebe

The declaration was given in 1928 during the election of the Reichstag, and does not obfuscate whom the Nazis viewed as their enemies. Emasculation wasn't only perceived as a threat from homosexual men but from Jews as well.

Jewishness and masculinity have been debated in Europe since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This idea manifested itself in most instances when Jewish emancipation was an issue and Jewish men were viewed as not masculine enough to take part in military operations. With growing anti-Semitism, however, such stereotypes changed from issues of masculinity to non-normative gender expressions in Jewish men. Reasons for the apparent lack of masculinity were plentiful, but tended to focus on the religious studiousness of the Jewish male and the dominant Jewish woman (cf. 2ff.). For Freud, on the other hand, the effeminate nature of the Jewish male stemmed from his circumcision, which essentially left him "no longer fully a male" (Gilman, *The Jew's Body* 156). The image of the emasculated Jew who inverted the order of the hyper masculine German gender ideal therefore became synonymous with all that needed to be annihilated.

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denkt, ist unser Feind. Alles, was unser Volk entmannt, zum Spielball seiner Feinde macht, lehnen wir ab [...]. Der Stärkere hat Recht. Und der Stärkere wird immer sich gegen den Schwächeren durchsetzen. Heute sind wir die Schwächeren. Sehen wir zu, daß wir wieder die Stärkeren werden! Das können wir aber nur, wenn wir Zucht üben. Wir verwerfen darum jede Unzucht, vor allem die Mann-männliche Liebe, weil sie uns der letzten Möglichkeit beraubt, jemals unser Volk von den Sklavenketten zu befreien, unter denen es jetzt front" (Grau, 53).



## 1.2 Lesbian, Tribade, or Female Friend?

In 1559 Italian anatomist Renaldo Columbo published *De re Anatomica* in which he first described the organ and its function. His prosaic description makes the clitoris a

certain small part, which is elevated on the apex vaginae above the foramen from which urine exits. And this dearest reader is that, it is the principal seat of women's enjoyment in intercourse; so that if you not only rub it with your penis, but even touch it with your little finger, the pleasure causes their seed to flow forth in all directions, swifter than the wind, even if they don't want it to. (Stringer and Becker 131–132)

The idea of the clitoris as an organ that gives pleasure clashed with the belief of that time, which saw women as being inverted men whose genitalia was merely hidden inside (cf. Laqueur 26ff.). If women now also had the clitoris as an external pleasure point this represented a second penis in the female body, a concept, which raised male concerns. If, as Valerie Traub notes in *Psychomorphology of the Clitoris*, the

vagina was seen as an inverted penis, the clitoris had to be an external one. Immediately the clitoris was linked to nonreproductive sex, and anxieties arose about women with clitorides capable of penetration; because of these anxieties, the clitoris, its size and function, was immediately linked to same-sex desire. (Traub)

The idea that the clitoris makes a woman capable of penetration inevitably evokes the notion of women penetrating same-sex or opposite-sex partners, thus ascribing masculinity to her. She is then viewed not as a 'complete total' woman but instead, based on her inverted genitalia; she becomes a masculinized woman, an inferior pseudo-male body. Nevertheless, tribadism is a sexual act; it does not automatically constitute a sexual identity and, unlike homosexuality, tribadism is only applicable for women.

The term lesbian, like tribade, is reserved for women only. Originating from the Greek 'lesbios' ("of lesbos") it refers to the Greek island Lesbos in the Aegean Sea (cf.

“Online Etymology Dictionary”). Home to the poet Sappho who wrote erotic poetry about women (and men!), Lesbos has since become closely connected with the notion of lesbianism. Valerie Traub, however, has brought up the point that “Lesbos was originally associated with fellatio and Sappho with prostitution rather than ‘lesbian’ desire; it was only after the second century A.D. that ‘Lesbos’ was associated with Sappho’s expression of desire for women” (Traub 104). Unlike tribadism, however, lesbianism is not limited to a bodily attribute or certain sexual acts. A Freudian understanding of the lesbian body, for instance, is one that has already been castrated and tries to overcome the loss of the penis through masculine dress and behavior. She is a lesbian not because of who she desires but by virtue of acting masculine to mask the lack of the phallus (cf. Price and Shildrick 116). Attempting to discuss female homosexuality ultimately leads to the prerequisite of including at least a short historical contextualization of the general term homosexuality. Coined in 1869 by the Hungarian journalist Karl-Maria Kertbeny, the term ‘homosexual’ became popular through its use in the 1892 translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*. In it, the Austro-German psychiatrist von Krafft-Ebing published a “compendium of more than two hundred case histories of individuals who illustrated ‘the various psychopathological manifestations of sexual life’” (Mondimore 35). The popularity of the *Psychopathia Sexualis* arguably is responsible for linking the discourse of homosexuality almost inseparably with the idea of mental illness. The concept of homosexuality – or any sexual identity for that matter – encompasses three distinct ideas, namely behavior, condition and social role. Yet, for the most part, society conflates the three ideas and assumes that they all together make up the personality of the homosexual. To quote Erwin J. Haeberle, Director of the Archive for

Sexology at the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin: “Homosexuals do what they do because they are what they are, and so they can always be recognized by their typical lifestyle” (Haeberle and Gindorf 15). Thus, the idea of what it means to be homosexual was infused with a second layer of meaning that completely obscured the aspect of erotic attraction of one human being to another, focusing instead on behavior and a ‘typical lifestyle’ (social role). Diverging from the normative heterosexual attraction and entrenched in the narrative of mental illness, homosexuality is then perceived as an undesirable practice threatening the heteronormative social stability. The concept of ‘contrary sexual feelings’ (Konträres Sexualempfinden) presented by German psychiatrist Carl Westphal gave way to the idea of ‘inversion’, both of which express the undesirability of the non-normative homosexual:

The patient suffering from this deplorable condition was an ‘invert.’ [...] A reversal or transposition of masculine into feminine erotic feelings in the case of men and of feminine into masculine erotic feelings in the case of women. The word contrary signaled that such a reversal went against nature and health, in short, that it was wrong, and that, ideally, there should be only complete ‘total men’ and complete ‘total women’ in whom everything ‘fit together.’ As one can see, Uranians, homosexuals, contrasexuals, or inverts disturbed a sense of psychiatric order. Female souls or feelings in male bodies (or vice versa) simply were not to be accepted as normal. (20)

What this quote illustrates quite well is that on one hand, the idea of a normal and an abnormal sexuality, and on the other hand, the belief of how this is expressed. The transposition of feelings of the other sex paves the way for the belief that the homosexual man will inevitably be effeminate, the homosexual woman masculine. Seeing as neither is a ‘complete total’ man or woman if feelings of the other sex are present, it stands to reason that they are lacking ‘real’ masculinity or femininity. In a logical fallacy, the gender role of homosexuals is presumed to be defective because they are homosexual.

The aforementioned conflation of behavior, condition, and social role into the concept of ‘the homosexual’ makes it impossible to distinguish between the three ideas and come to the logical conclusion that the triad can be – must be – separated into its distinct parts.<sup>12</sup> The National Socialist fear of (male) homosexuals is rooted in this conflation of ideas, which a priori ascribes the homosexual men with emasculating traits and bases the identification of homosexuals on behavior and social role rather than the condition of being erotically attracted to members of the same sex. Such conflation and twisting of expectations about behavior and visibility of gender roles to fit established linguistic signs is problematic, however, as it affects what is represented and understood as belonging to this sign.

Writing about women who would nowadays for the most part use the word ‘lesbian’ to describe themselves and their sexual identity necessitates a definition or explanation about what is meant within the context of this dissertation when I use terms such as ‘homosexual women’, ‘lesbian women’ or simply ‘tribade(s).’ Moreover, it already reveals a significant problem that I encountered during my research: How to identify the research subject I was looking for. The origin and implications of the term homosexual have already been discussed; I will now focus on some of the terms used exclusively for female homosexuals during the Third Reich. At that time, vocabulary for women who loved women was inevitably less obvious so as not to draw attention to themselves. Personal ads in the women’s magazine *Die Freundin* use the inculpable

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<sup>12</sup> Only in separating the concept of homosexuality into its three distinct ideas can one make sense of the behavior of people isolated from the opposite sex. Homosexual activity between young adolescents, prisoners or boarding school students, to give some examples, is not automatically an expression of homosexual feelings. It can simply be a behavior without any influence on condition or social role.

words ‘Freundin’ or ‘Bekannte’<sup>13</sup> although a romantic interest can be inferred from the ads. Sabine Schrader provides examples of these personal ads that are phrased as “Lady [...] wishing for smart female friend of medium height”, “Rhineland, blonde, funny, in search of sweet female friend”, or “Düsseldorf! Attention! Female friends [...] meet regularly every Wednesday [...]. Dancing and conversation” (Schrader 34–35).<sup>14</sup> Here alone are two terms, which could only in context be interpreted as having sexual innuendo. On the other hand, however, there are also those terms used by outsiders to describe the women they saw, often simultaneously ascribing judgment to them. Schrader’s article provides quotes regarding the reflections by a heterosexual spectator of such a dance as was described in the ad above, who observes: “These are again tribades or lesbians who can find sexual satisfaction only in intercourse” (ibid).<sup>15</sup> Two very important details can be taken from the description of this observation. The first one is the use of the term ‘tribades’ which is defined in the dictionary as

c.1600, ‘a lesbian,’ from French *tribade* (16c.) or directly from Latin *tribas*, from Greek *tribas*, from *tribein* ‘to rub, rub down, wear away,’ [...]. In reference to a specific sexual technique. (“Online Etymology Dictionary”)

The spectator is using both terms quite redundantly, while at the same time emphasizing the meaning of the act against nature he is witnessing between two women. Likewise, he reduces the significance to something purely sexual, to women who can only find pleasure in sexual intercourse and sexual satisfaction only in intercourse with each other.

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<sup>13</sup> Female friend or Acquaintance

<sup>14</sup> “Dame [...] wünscht sich kluge mittelgroße Freundin”, “Rheinländerin, blond, lustig, sucht liebe Freundin” or “Düsseldorf! Achtung! Freundinnen [...] treffen sich regelmäßig an jedem Mittwoch [...]. Tanz und Unterhaltung”.

<sup>15</sup> “Es handelt sich bei diesen Frauen wieder um Tribaden oder Lesbierinnen, die ihre geschlechtliche Befriedigung nur im Verkehr finden können”.

By providing the reader with the term ‘tribades’ he also inherently refers to the specific way these women will gain sexual satisfaction by rubbing their clitorises against each other. The ‘discovery’ of the clitoris in conjunction with the implications of this sexual practice is laden with opportunities for analysis that underscore the theory of defective gender roles that was prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany. By focusing on sexual practices as the defining factor for gender identity another problematic issue is being raised: Where and how to distinguish between female same-sex attraction and romantic friendships as well as classifiers within one category. The identifiers ‘femme’, ‘soft’ or ‘butch’ as addendums to ‘lesbian’ classify the gender role a woman prefers – and the sexual practices associated with it – but break down an already small category into even smaller parts.

In contemporary queer studies such narrowing down of categories is perceived as counterproductive to the field. In the early years of gender and queer studies it was appropriate to create subcategories by defining what gender and queer theory addresses and what it excludes. However, the need to define gender and queer theory studies has changed as the field has been established. Although there is a consensus about the problem in using subcategories as described above, the reality is that it is done regardless. The stability of gender identities and gender categories is assumed, creating a conundrum that Judith Halberstam describes perfectly when she refers to identity labels like ‘lesbian’ as “the term we affix to the pleasurable and cumbersome intersections of embodiments, practices, and roles that historical processes have winnowed down to the precise specifications of an identity” (Halberstam 50). An identity that is, furthermore, not essentially tied to sexual activity per se but can also be understood as a way of seeing the

world that is different from the normative patriarchal worldview. Feminist philosopher and professor Ruth Ginsburg, not to be confused with Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Ruth Ginsburg, notes that many lesbians seem to identify as lesbian as part of a feminist political act. For her,

‘being lesbian’ is not only, or even primarily, a matter of who rubs genitals with whom, but rather that it constitutes an entirely different way of seeing the world. From this perspective, women are no longer in the background, helping hands in the drama of patriarchy. Instead, women are the primary focus of all sorts of attention, including erotic attention. Lesbians who identify themselves in this way perceive lesbianism as a consciously chosen path, one that they could have rejected but did not. Many regard it as at least partly a political decision, to choose to focus their attention on women rather than men. (Card 86)

While I agree with the opening statement that ‘being lesbian’ is not about who has sex with whom, I would debate that it is nonetheless not a matter of conscious choice to ‘be’ a lesbian. To reduce sexual identity to a political decision of viewing the world differently from the normative patriarchal position is to neglect the emotional attachment that goes along with sexual attraction.

Hilde Radusch, German communist activist and (in later life) self-identified lesbian, was 30 when the Nazis seized power in 1933. As an active member and councilwoman for the German communist party (KPD) she was also openly living with women. Recalling her memories from those years she writes in a letter dated January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1979: “I heard the word ‘lesbian’ for the first time when I found a police report among the documents of the district exchange [Berlin] Schöneberg in 1945. [...]” (Radusch).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “Das Wort ‘lesbisch’ hörte ich zum ersten Mal, als ich nach 1945 eine Anzeige gegen mich in den Unterlagen des Bezirksamtes Schöneberg vorfand”. In this context I would like to mention the 2011 radio talk show “Bestrafe wenige und meine alle.” Über die Situation lesbischer Frauen im Nationalsozialismus” that includes anonymous interviews

Radusch philosophizes about terminology then and now, remarking, “we young women were called ‘Bubi’”.<sup>17</sup> Whether this is meant as a feminine version of the German word ‘Bub’, meaning boy, or whether it has its roots in the word ‘Bubikopf’ (=Eton crop) cannot be safely concluded. Both, however, refer to the masculine gender and ‘Bubikopf’, the term for a women’s short haircut reminiscent of men’s short hair, is part of the embodiment of female masculinity. Other sources mention another term that appeared in numerous of the analyzed materials: ‘kesser Vater’, which can be translated to ‘butch lesbian’ or – more literally – ‘perky father.’ The concept behind the idea of ‘kesser Vater’ is the manly woman who emulates the patriarchal structure of the heterosexual family unit by reigning in the home, dressing masculine and enforcing strict gender roles in a relationship. In the aforementioned letter Hilde Radusch observed, “the rule of the men in the home should not be replicated. The popular ‘kesse Vater’ (widows who want to rid themselves of torture by inflicting pain on others) was already beginning to die out in the Weimar Republic” (Radusch).<sup>18</sup> This notion of pain and torture, which is inflicted on women as part of the term ‘kesser Vater’ (‘butch lesbian’) to describe women-loving-women underscores the differences in behavior and appearance that has been ascribed to homosexual individuals since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Where homosexual men were effeminate and lacked masculine traits, lesbian women exhibited attributes that threatened normative heterosexuality by undermining questions of power

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with women who lived as lesbians during the Nazi era. Their observations of the term ‘lesbian’ mirror Radusch’s, in that they themselves did not use it to refer to themselves until the rise of the new lesbian/women movement in the 1970s.

<sup>17</sup> “Wir jungen Frauen hießen ‘Bubi’”.

<sup>18</sup> “Die Herrschaft des Mannes im häuslichen Bereich soll nicht wiederholt werden. Der berühmte ‘kesse Vater’ (Witwen, die sich die Quälerei aus dem Leibe schaffen wollen, indem sie andere quälen) war schon in der Weimarer Republik im Absterben”.



and legitimacy previously reserved to the patriarchal male rule. Infusing masculinity with ideas of power and social privilege subsequently imparts the possibility of subterfuge on lesbian women. They can act out, try to pass as male, in an attempt to gain male privilege, yet they will never be ‘real’ men.

In Claudia Schoppmann’s texts the alleged as well as the accuser(s) use the term “the warm one” to describe a lesbian in virtually all of the accounts collected.<sup>19</sup> Although no definite historical reference or evidence for its origin can be found, it is very closely related to the practice of calling a gay man “warm brother”, which has a curious German etymological origin in and of itself.<sup>20</sup> As James D. Steakley explains:

The doublet schwul/schwül has an interesting etymology: “The adjective was taken over in the form ‘schwul’ from Low German into High German in the 17th century.... The New High German form arose in the 18th century, probably under the influence of ‘kühl.’ The form ‘schwul’ has been used since the 19th century as colloquial for ‘homosexual’” [...] Magnus Hirschfeld, as usual, has a biological explanation: “In general the skin of the Urning is warmer to the touch than that of persons around him. It appears that the designation ‘warmer Bruder,’ which is widespread in popular usage, has its physiological foundation in this phenomenon (also the word ‘schwul’ = ‘schwül’ has a similar meaning”. (Steakley 94)

Whether or not heightened body temperature was an indicator of homosexuality or not is irrelevant for this discussion; it is, however, noteworthy to address the language as a marker for the medicalization of the discourse that began during the Weimar Republic and continued well into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, “die warme” (the warm one) and the male equivalent “warmer Bruder” (warm brother) are the only examples given of a term that has not been claimed by the gay and lesbian community.

Reappropriation, the process of adopting something pejorative and turning it into the

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<sup>19</sup> “die Warme”.

<sup>20</sup> “warmer Bruder”.

affirmative, has happened for the words ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ and ‘homosexual’, among others, and indeed one can understand reappropriation as “the lexical equivalent of the process sometimes referred to as ‘queering’ [...] whereby objects and institutions are ‘reread’ from a gay perspective” (Harvey and Shalom 69). Coming back to Ferdinand de Saussure, such queering can either take the form of changing the value of a signifier and signified or by completely substituting the sign. This is possible because of the fluidity of language in which words do not indicate pre-existing concepts but rather an ‘exchange value’ of meaning that can be altered. As part of the linguistic system of a language the sign’s “content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside it. Being part of a system, it is endowed not only with a signification but also and especially with a value” (Saussure 67). A perfect example for substitution of a sign is the term ‘gay’, which up until the 1960s was devoid of any sexual connotation and meant ‘happy.’ In the 21<sup>st</sup> century dictionary entries define gay as a denominator for homosexual men and some add that the original meaning happy is now dated (cf. “Gay”).

Reappropriation is an important practice for marginalized groups since it *attempts* to take away the power of the oppressor. I say “attempts” because there have been debates about the usefulness and psychological consequences of reappropriation. Consider the example of a young teenage boy who is tormented by schoolmates who call him gay. Realizing that he is attracted to other men but aware of the negative stereotypes this word holds, he is conflicted about using it to refer to himself. Will he become everything that is implied in the term if he decides to accept it? Will the fact that, for those who oppress him, ‘gay’ is rich with loathing and disgust influence him in how he feels about himself? The paradox should be clear: Two systems using the same sign with

a slightly different – negative or positive – signified essentially means two conflicting messages whose psychological repercussions need to be navigated. From his schoolmates the message may be “You are attracted to men, therefore you are less than we are” whereas from members of the gay community it could be something along the lines of “You are attracted to men, therefore you belong and we value you”. The consequences of such ambiguity for the Self can be devastating:

Individuals embedded in contexts that provide conflicting, contradictory, or negative messages must struggle to find a balance between the negative selves thrust upon them and the positive senses of self they would like to create. [...] Confronting the meanings that others provide can be a full time task, leaving little room for self-constructed individuality. (Leary)

Sander L. Gilman uses a very similar concept in his study on Jewish self-hatred that is also applicable here. He says:

Anyone faced with a set of such conflicting, inherently irreconcilable signs represses this conflict, saying, in effect, The contradiction must be within me, since that which I wish to become cannot be flawed. Perhaps I truly am different, a parody of that which I wish to be. [...] yet one is still not accepted, For the ideal state is never to have been the Other, a state that cannot be achieved. (Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred* 3)

Both for the Jewish person caught in this double-bind as well as the homosexual the consequence is “the fragmentation of identity that results in the articulation of self-hatred” (3)

It should have become clear by now that there is more to these particular terms than is obvious at first glance. Gender roles, expectations of sexual acts or the amount of masculinity/femininity that is exhibited, are conflated and twisted to fit the mold of a linguistic sign. It remains to be seen, then, if the narratives in my analysis make use of language-specific terminologies for women-loving-women and how it affects the

representation of lesbians.<sup>21</sup> Sander Gilman's insight into the "problem" of Jewish masculinity may add a further level of complexity to Jewish female identity that this study will have to address. The first problem one encounters in this endeavor is that contemporary, orthodox Judaism in Israel defines some women in a relational way to men. Without man woman is nothing, only as his companion "for the purpose of enabling the continuity of the species through childbearing" (Rubin-Dorsky and Fishkin 362) is she ascribed an identity of value. That it is not a freely chosen identity but one allocated by Jewish tradition "embedded deeply within the structure of biblical and ancient Judaism" (362) illustrates the dimensions of the problem that Jewish women regardless of their sexual orientation are coming up against, albeit to differing degrees depending on the more orthodox or liberal orientation of their faith community. The relational concept posits the heterosexual woman opposite the heterosexual man, anatomically 'fitting' them together by being able to insert the male penis into the female vagina.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> I have staked out my analysis to center on lesbian women. An inclusion of bisexuality/bisexual women would go beyond the scope of this analysis. Bisexuals, people erotically attracted to both sexes, and their persecution during the Holocaust is even less documented and researched than the lesbian persecution. This is in part due to the fact that individuals were identified as homosexual or heterosexual based on the apparent sex of their partner. A self-identified bisexual person with a partner of the opposite sex would thus not be picked out as a bisexual. A self-identified bisexual person with a same-sex partner, however, would be perceived as homosexual because the snapshot of the moment does not give any information about past sexual partners/relationships. I am aware that in a reversal of this one could also say that a lesbian could possibly be a bisexual woman. The same questions that I will be asking and answering for lesbian women during the Holocaust can be posed with bisexual women (and men) in mind.

<sup>22</sup> I would argue that homosexual women and men could make a similar claim by citing other body parts/orifices and sexual acts. The actual meaning behind the concept lies in the reproductive ability associated with heterosexual acts.

For Jewish females identity formation in the past revolved around having little choice and no voice in the matters of their lives. In the foreword to *Celebrating the Lives of Jewish Women* Maria Cohn Siegel contends that change is happening:

For almost 2,000 years Jewish women were silenced, excluded from full participation in Jewish life by a series of laws that prohibited them from study, public prayer, and positions of religious leadership. [...] Silence was expected. We were raised to listen and be obedient, not to make waves. Our needs were subservient to those of the family. [...] We no longer have to hide our contributions to Jewish life and survival, nor the darker aspects of our histories. We are exploring where we came from and the influences that shaped our lives, so that we can understand who we are and where we are going. We will keep silent no more. We are speaking out in clear voices, not concealing the truth from one another. We are learning to support each other as we move forward. And we are treasuring our differences as we treasure our similarities. We are stepping forward as equals, to share in the full responsibilities of Jewish life, to be counted, and above all to be heard. We are changing Jewish life forever. (Siegel et al., xxi ff.)

Siegel has touched upon some important aspects of ultra-orthodox Judaism, which inform challenges to a more positive Jewish female identity formation: Being marginalized within a community, being silenced, and putting one's needs last. There have been few studies that also incorporate religion into their exploration, especially in regards to sexual identity formation. Mark A. Yarhouse, Doctor of Psychology, published a study in 2001 in which he noted two things that also pertain to Jewish women/Jewish lesbians and their identity formation within the religious context. The first is applicable to both, stating that "when many people are confronted with conflicts between sexuality and religion, they either yield to a teaching in which they do not believe or feel they must abandon their religious heritage" (McAdams et al., 38). 'Sexuality' in this sense refers to any expression of sexual attraction between people and can be applied to any conflict between a person's religion and their thoughts or expressions of sexual feelings. Jewish

women who do not fall as much outside the framework of the traditional Jewish religious context may find it easier to adhere to or ‘yield to’ the teachings they were brought up with.<sup>23</sup> A case in point would be the male-female relational concept of complementarity in which a heterosexual woman may find the juxtaposition with men a matter of course and only argue the dominance structure as explained previously. For a Jewish lesbian identity formation, however, it is the relation of herself as a woman to a woman that plays a central role in her identity as a lesbian. An identity formation based on this concept may still be possible for a heterosexual Jewish woman but will hardly be achievable for the lesbian Jew. Furthermore, if we delve deeper into the religious aspect underlying the matter, a look at Genesis explains the male dominance inherent in the notion of male-female relations. God spoke to Eve after her disobedience and chastised her: “thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16). From Genesis on the Hebrew Bible does not lend itself for women in search of their identity, be it lesbian or heterosexual. On the contrary, from the start Jewish lesbian women will necessarily question the conjecture that is made about their desire for men, heterosexual Jewish women will struggle with power issues arising from the promise that their husband shall rule over them. Females and lesbians have to negotiate their position not toward the whole of Judaism but the traditions and texts that form their religious identities. Yarhouse explains that “it matters most not whether a person pursues a particular path of identity

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<sup>23</sup> The following discussion will deal primarily with orthodox Jewish traditions as theses have the most stringent and repressive laws on homosexuality. There are, no doubt, more open faith communities on the spectrum of Judaism from Reformist to Liberal Jews. Orthodox Jewish culture, however, will give the most conservative view of what it means for Jewish women and Jewish lesbians to attempt individual identity formation within (or outside) the context of their faith.

synthesis but whether their identity synthesis is congruent with their broader framework” (McAdams et al., 39).

The duality between identity synthesis and congruency with the broader framework of life – religious traditions, family beliefs, societal expectations, etc. – are struggles in identity formation for Jewish females and Jewish lesbians. I would contend, however, that Jewish lesbians in their struggle for identity have a further process of inner turmoil and reconciliation to deal with as they try to “try to develop a positive personal identity that incorporates both their sexuality and their religious beliefs” (39). As I will explain in the following chapter on Memory and Identity, the ‘formation of the self’ is a process towards an identity that mirrors who ‘I’ am in relation to my surroundings and the group that I share a collective identity and collective memory with. Yet whereas such a formation of the self, of identity, outside of a religious tradition can happen relatively undisturbed, entanglement within a religious tradition that holds strong values against female independence and non-heteronormative sexual identities can lead to dualistic, disharmonious, irreconcilable frictions. Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans identified in *The Dialogical Self: Beyond Individualism and Rationalism* that the self does not necessarily have to be one consistent and coherent entity in order to form a healthy identity. Instead,

the dialogical self is based on the assumption that in contrast with the individualistic self... there are many *I* positions that can be occupied by the same person. The *I* in one position can agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, contradict, question, and even ridicule the *I* in another position. (Hermans et al., 29)

The plurality that Jewish women – lesbian and heterosexual – are subjected to and have to navigate according to Hermans therefore do not necessarily constitute a negative

impact on identity formation. I contend, however, that Herman's stance is not applicable to the religious traditions of Jewish life. Between a "rigorous religious commitment, and mutually exclusive communal demands" which Jewish lesbians need to reconcile with their "identities in relation to the traditions, texts, practices, communities, and lifestyles that often seem irreconcilably conflicted" (McAdams et al., 41) there is a choice they have to make that heterosexual Jewish women are not subjected to. The two conflicting selves of their personalities, their sexual identity and their religious identity, are mutually exclusive in an orthodox context and even problematic in a liberal Judaic tradition. Yet, as McAdams et al. found in their study for *Identity and Story*, "neither one of these identities is assimilated into the other [...] but the dimensions of a primary identification that creates the possibility for their viable coexistence" (42) exist.

McAdams et al. conclusion fits into the discourse of memory and identity of the following chapter. Although I will only briefly go into the details of Jewish lesbian and Jewish female identity formation, it will become clear that even within the orthodox Jewish tradition a non-heteronormative sexual identity can be developed and maintained. Shared memory, shared tradition, collective beliefs and rituals can compensate for the lack of acceptance by members of the collective or the holy writ that holds the collective together. In this case, the self separates the negative – or dismissive – parts of the collective memory and collective identity to find a niche in which the sexual identity is acceptable to express.<sup>24</sup> The path towards an integrated or coexisting religious and sexual identity, though, can only be understood as the attempt of a painful resolve

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<sup>24</sup> This niche is not one of the many 'I' positions that Hermans mentioned in his essay. I am referring to the self that is not split in any way but finds a way to have both parts of the identity exist in unison next to each other.



between what is dictated by the religious tradition and the psychological element of the self. In the accounts of Jewish homosexuals I studied, no simple single solution to the problem was given. What remained was the conclusion that

homosexual and religious identities seem indeed to be involved in a constant process of negotiation that posits the intrinsic validity of both as each learns about the other's experiences, exchanges information about these identities, and thereby comes to learn its requirement for viability and health as it strives to create a psychic landscape conducive to coexistence. (McAdams et al., 57)

It cannot be denied that women face different kinds of problems in the formation of their identity as women than men within the Jewish tradition. Jewish lesbians, moreover, also have to arrange themselves and contend with the patriarchy of Judaism. In between 'being' homosexual and trying to find a way of 'doing' homosexuality, i.e. having sexual relationships, "the notion of identity synthesis is far more than merely nonresonant: It is an oxymoron" (57).

I would reaffirm that Jewish heterosexual women and Jewish lesbians can only reconcile both identities by acknowledging their coexistence and finding differing collectives in which to live these identities. The differing selves or "I's" that Hubert Herman cites in his research will only be able to exist fully and consciously if integrated successfully. As will become clear when I write about the function of memory as well as memory and its meaning for identity in the following chapter, different collectives can serve as places for recognition and identity formation.

### 1.3 Nazi Sexual Policy and their Perception of Women

In order to understand the differences in the discrimination and persecution of gays and lesbians one needs to analyze the official sexual policies and their effect on women and female sexuality during the Nazi era. Heinrich Himmler used an address during the wedding celebration of a high-ranking SS official to explain why the German Reich is first and foremost an example of a patriarchal society: “We are a patriarchal society and even with all the mistakes this patriarchal society has we have to adamantly hold on to it. The incorporation of the patriarchal society is the better one” (Geheimreden 94).<sup>25</sup> Himmler traces the masculinity of the German Reich back millennia, declaring, “For thousands of years the Germanic people and especially the German people, have been governed in a patriarchal way” (94).<sup>26</sup> The Nazi emphasis on masculinity and patriarchy lead to a gendered social hierarchy, which placed women in a status of dependency from men. By themselves women were only relevant as mothers of future German children for the Führer and relegated to the home.<sup>27</sup> The noblest achievement a woman could reach entwined the political with the private world: The *Mutterkreuz*<sup>28</sup> was the official recognition of the number of children a woman had given birth to. Awarded to those with four or more children, the preamble of the statute declares it to be the “visible sign of

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<sup>25</sup> “Wir sind ein Männerstaat, und bei allen Fehlern, die dieser Männerstaat hat, müssen wir eisern daran festhalten. Die Errichtung des Männerstaates ist die bessere”.

<sup>26</sup> “Seit Jahrtausenden sind die germanischen Völker und insbesondere das deutsche Volk männerstaatlich regiert worden”.

<sup>27</sup> Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), a German politician and writer in a variety of NDSAP institutions, engaged in research about witches. His book *Myths of the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (1931) includes a chapter on the relationship between state and gender. He propagates that the destruction of the state can always be blamed on “the disintegration of the ideal of masculine breeding” by women (Rosenberg 490).

<sup>28</sup> Cross of Honor of the German Mother.

gratitude of the German nation”(Reichsgesetzblatt).<sup>29</sup> Claudia Schoppmann remarks about this:

[T]he National Socialist ideology presumed the first purpose of the ‘aryan’ woman to be motherhood and marriage – as long as she was not classified as genetically inferior. A population policy based on an increase in birthrates was the prime requirement for the conquest policy of the Nazis [...]. Marriage and motherhood were thus political matters.<sup>30</sup> (Jellonek and Lautmann 75)

Thus, hard-won positions in political offices or other official places that women fought for during the Weimar Republic were suddenly lost again and assigned to men. Furthermore, equating femininity with fertility, a rhetorical device that was so central to Nazi rhetoric created a female identity similarly grounded in and written upon the body.

Bearing and rearing children for the Führer, to raise the Herrenrasse, also tied into the racial policies aimed at keeping the blood pure. In this context, Alfred Rosenberg argued in his 1935 book *Blut und Ehre* that “in the hands of the woman lies the conservation of our race” (Rosenberg and Trotha 221).<sup>31</sup> That this is not to mean equality of the sexes and freedom for women to work and live as they please becomes clear in the follow-up to the previous statement. Rosenberg continues by railing against emancipated women who want to adopt ‘male talents’ and calls women “an entity that lacks abilities, a ‘plantlike’ passive bearer of the law” (221).<sup>32</sup> Himmler constructed a similar argument in

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<sup>29</sup> Als sichtbares Zeichen des Dankes des Deutschen Volkes.

<sup>30</sup> “Die NS Ideologie sah eine prinzipielle Bestimmung der ‘arischen’ Frau zu Mutterschaft und Ehe vor – sofern nicht als erbkrank einzuordnen. Eine auf Steigerung der Geburtenrate abzielende Bevölkerungspolitik war eine zentrale Voraussetzung für die von den Nazis angestrebte kriegerische Eroberungspolitik [...]. Ehe und Mutterschaft waren unter diesen Voraussetzungen ein Politikum ersten Ranges”.

<sup>31</sup> “In der Hand der Frau liegt die Erhaltung unserer Rasse”.

<sup>32</sup> “ein fähigkeitsloses Wesen, eine ‘pflanzhafte’ passive Trägerin der Gesetze”.

one of his speeches to SS members, verbalizing his contempt of what was happening to the women of the Reich:

In my opinion there is far too much masculinization in our lives [...]. I think it a catastrophe when I see girls and women – especially girls – walk about with a wonderfully packed knapsack. One can get sick from it. I think it a catastrophe when women's organizations, women's communities, women's societies work in a field that destroys any female attraction, any female dignity and grace. I think it a catastrophe [...] when we masculinize women so much that with time any gender difference, any polarity, disappears.<sup>33</sup> (Himmler 99)

We see here some of the reasoning the National Socialists had for keeping women inside the home and men as the head and ruler of the family. Polarities – gender differences – are given as key points for a functioning society. Rosenberg as well as Himmler formulate that it is femininity, feminine grace, which is important in a woman. She is not fit to think or decide or to rule, but instead has natural abilities for housekeeping, nurturing and following the male lead. This view was shared by many of the leading female National Socialists of the women's organizations within the NSDAP as well.<sup>34</sup> The women's organizations, though geared towards women, were modeled after the men's organizational structure and their duties were mainly providing a platform to share the national socialist message in a more positive way for women. The role women were expected to fill was emphasized as an important part of the family unit,

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<sup>33</sup> “Wir haben m.E. eine viel zu starke Vermännlichung unseres ganzen Lebens [...]. Ich empfinde es als Katastrophe, wenn ich Mädels und Frauen sehe – vor allem Mädels –, die mit einem wunderbar gepackten Tornister durch die Gegend ziehen. Da kann einem schlecht werden. Ich sehe es als Katastrophe an, wenn Frauenorganisationen, Frauengemeinschaften, Frauenbünde sich auf einem Gebiet betätigen, das jeden weiblichen Reiz, jede weibliche Würde und Anmut zerstört. Ich sehe es als Katastrophe an [...] wenn wir die Frauen so vermännlichen, daß mit der Zeit der Geschlechtsunterschied, die Polarität verschwindet”.

<sup>34</sup> These include Deutscher Frauenorden (DFO), NS-Frauenschaft (NSF), Bund Deutscher Mädchen (BDM), Deutsche Frauenfront (DFF), and Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Frauenvereine (RAG) among others.

rather than merely functioning as the supporter for the men. Child bearing and rearing, the mother cross distinction and especially a focus on femininity were part of these women's organizations. These organizations were dedicated to developing and sustaining the femininity that Himmler criticized women for losing. By providing women with similar institutions as their male counterparts one of their primary goals of the regime was already accomplished: Women could feel included in the NSDAP and its vision and mission without actually being part of the all-exclusive male institution. In essence, this was another step to assuring that women would not disturb the patriarchal hierarchy. In simple terms, they were excluded from the 'boys club' but by instituting a – similar, yet lesser and supervised – 'girls club' they were appeased and discouraged from running interference.<sup>35</sup>

Consider for example the assembly of the female members of the National Socialist Teachers' Association (NSLB) in 1934, which was dedicated to developing intellectual gifts of young girls. One of the senior authorities proposed:

The female mind differs in its approach to mundane occurrences from the male mind, which excludes inward involvement and takes a coolly businesslike pride in its 'objective' attitude. Owing to her natural disposition, her greater reverence for life, woman has the capacity for that inner devotion which more deeply fathoms the nature of things and perceives their true value and substance by means of loving absorption. (Bleuel 55)

The terms "reverence", "devotion" and "absorption" are merely euphemisms for obedience but delivered in a way that was supposed to entice female listeners. The rhetorical strategies that the Nazis employed highlighted that women and men were equal

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<sup>35</sup> The same strategy was later applied in regards to the Jewish population. By keeping Jews out of Aryan organizations and administrative offices but granting the right to create Jewish council and administrative offices a subterfuge was achieved.

but inhabited different social spheres – the home and the world –, that there is strength and responsibility in raising children for the benefit of the Volk, and that it is the nature of the German woman “to do all that is required of her, and to do so gladly” (Scholtz - Klink 14).<sup>36</sup>

Within the context of women losing their femininity and politics geared towards procreation, and thus sexuality, one must also take into account how National Socialists perceived (German) female sexuality. Seen as the vessel for German blood and recognized for the number of children women bore the German nation, a woman's value was tied to her ability to procreate. In the absence of the medical possibilities open to men and women today, sexual intercourse was the only way for men to ‘deposit’ their semen into this female ‘vessel.’ The vessel does not do anything; it is passive, it receives. The giver produces life, produces semen, and delivers it into the vessel. As the active partner in this exchange, the physiological processes of the male were not only more visible but also deemed more important. Ejaculation occurs when the man climaxes, a process that is preceded by getting an erection. In order to get an erection, however, stimulation and a high level of excitement of the nervous system is needed. Thus the phallus serves as the visible expression of pleasure and lust in men, while simultaneously denoting its necessity for successful intercourse and insemination. Without pleasure an erection cannot occur and, consequently, no ejaculation. Female sexuality on the other hand, without a bold physiological expression of pleasure and excitement of the nervous system, did not include a need for pleasure or orgasm. Because lust was not seen as necessary for women to have intercourse it was also perceived as irrelevant in the

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<sup>36</sup> “Sie muss so sein, dass sie alles, was von ihr gefordert wird, gern tut”.

expression of their sexuality. In fact, it is only in the absence of the procreation discourse that female pleasure seems to come into play. Upon observing lesbian women dancing with each other a spectator notes that lesbians “can find sexual satisfaction only in intercourse” (Mittag). Here, homosexual female sexuality is perceived as purely for personal pleasure and sexual satisfaction while at the same time implying that heterosexual women find their sexual satisfaction outside of intercourse. This implication at once underscores the lack of sexual pleasure ascribed to female sexuality while at the same time giving the impression that heterosexual women can find sexual satisfaction in other areas of life unconnected to sexual intercourse. That there is an obligation to observe and analyze female homosexuality in this way reiterates the commitment of the Nazis to create one stable image of sexual identity. Inevitably, that which is perceived as normative and ‘common’ lacks a need to be examined and explained.

In light of this view of female sexuality, the treatment of female homosexuality as not worth persecuting with a separate law, similar to §175, is comprehensible. With women being seen as “always available for intercourse” (Mittag) and men such as philosopher Ernst Bergmann calling for “forced intercourse” (Bergmann 404) if women strayed from the political party line, female sexuality is reduced to the biological ability to ovulate and carry a child to term. As Mittag noted, lesbian women were still ‘usable’ to bear children and contribute to the population growth. Homosexual men on the other hand were considered useless since they could not perform heterosexual intercourse anymore and, much more importantly, as the giver of the seed/life, they were also considered to be the ones keeping German blood healthy and free of degenerate

influences. They could not be allowed to procreate even if they proved themselves to be capable of heterosexual intercourse.

## **1.4 Lesbian Victims**

Having elaborated on the role and function of women in Nazi Germany, the next step is to situate lesbian victims within the discourse of the Holocaust and to compare/contrast them with other victim groups, i.e. mentally ill, Jews, or Sinti and Roma. At the beginning of the chapter I already made a point of illustrating that the persecution and discrimination of lesbian women and gay men differed; it is now pertinent to detail the nature of these differences as well as similarities, what made lesbians an (easy) target for Nazi discrimination, and how their experience relates to that of other victim groups.

The question where lesbians fit into the category ‘woman’ has occupied feminist theorists since the 1980s, yet feminist analyses of fascism has largely been excluded “from the ‘official’ = male fascism discourse” (Hauer 47).<sup>37</sup> Consequently, and although the assumption that ‘woman’ “signifies a set of universal commonalities, that all women share a common oppression” (Calhoun 9) is still a central idea explored in gender studies, the repercussions from being excluded from the discourse have resulted in ignorance of the uniquely lesbian experience. Hence the first distinction that has to be made to situate the experience of lesbians during the Third Reich is the importance of the gender/gender roles that the Nazis maintained. The previously outlined National Socialist view of

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<sup>37</sup> “aus dem ’öffentlichen’ = männlichen Faschismustheoriediskurs“.



women reinforced the understanding of the NS view of Germany as a patriarchal system. By default, women are discriminated against in a patriarchal society by virtue of their sex. Through division of labor women were confined to the home, either metaphorically or literally, and their influence in the public sphere was reduced considerably. The Nazis managed this with the popular slogan *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church) and “tied women to their traditional role” (Heger 12). Lesbians, as women, were subjected to this form of discrimination but also, additionally, to the measures taken against them as lesbians who fell outside the traditional – *normal* – gender role. This brings up the first difference in the experience of lesbians that is not applicable to other victim groups: The disappearance of their identity as lesbians behind that of being women while simultaneously remaining victims of Nazi discrimination and persecution on two different levels.<sup>38</sup> Two separate ideological constructions become entwined here, that of sexism with homophobia, exhibited as a gender-specific persecution. In contrast to this, anti-Semitism and racism, for example, were the driving forces behind the persecution of Jews or Gypsies. This is not to say that there weren’t gender-specific differences in the persecution of these (and other) victim groups, but I would argue that these differences are gender-specific experiences within the larger frame of Jewishness. Sara Horowitz portrays an example of this in her essay *Gender, Genocide, and Jewish Memory*. “Already in ghetto writing” she says,

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<sup>38</sup> This can at least be said to be true for the Aryan woman who was of importance to the Nazis as a possible mother. While I don’t doubt that there were lesbian women in other victim groups, I argue that their lesbian identity didn’t factor into the reasons of their persecution.

one can see how cultural assumptions and expectations about gender are enfolded in the victim's understanding of ongoing events. Abruptly displaced and caught horribly in a genocidal net whose purpose ghetto inhabitants learn of only gradually, Jewish men and women struggled to survive unbearable conditions – hunger, filth, epidemics, omnipresent death. *Equally targeted for death*, men and women in the ghetto grappled with both similar and different situations. For example, men were more subject to deportation to labor camps, they performed manual labor and endured beatings; they occupied most leadership roles. Women attempted to fulfill domestic duties under conditions that made them nearly impossible, stretching meager rations and doing without to feed a family. They faced the dangers of unwanted (and forbidden) pregnancies, and they served as couriers and liaisons in resistance operations. (Horowitz 170, emphasis added)

Women were targeted as Jews and they were equally targeted for death, with little regard to their biological sex or sexual identity. Consequently, the gender-specific experiences that have been researched as part of gender analysis in the Holocaust discourse ultimately examine how men and women *within one group* faced the torture they were subjected to. Thus, the category of race is analyzed in terms of the category gender but there is no investigation of the category gender separate from race. Jewish lesbians who were persecuted are analyzed in terms of their Jewishness, not their sexuality. Non-Jewish lesbians are thus not seen as victims because they are not in the more highly analyzed category Jewish. As a result any conversation about lesbian persecution is silenced; lesbian victims become invisible.

Silence and invisibility are also what affected the gay and lesbian community and especially lesbian life after the Nazis smothered the blossoming homosexual subculture of the Weimar Republic. 1933 marks the end of a semi-open lesbian and gay life when bars and other meeting places of gays and lesbians were closed and several laws adopted, targeting magazines and newspapers for the community. 'Gleichschaltung' describes the political process of the Nazis to shut down all anti-fascist organizations and merge the

different German states into the German Reich under the umbrella of National Socialist leadership. The process involved all regional and local political levels and successively those who opposed National Socialist politics found themselves as outsiders in a system that tolerated no deviation from the party ideal (cf. Hildebrand 7ff.). For lesbian women this meant that the women's movement of the Weimar Republic and its clubs, organizations and publications were also either banned or assimilated into loyal Nazi organizations. Claudia Schoppmann notes the importance of this process, explaining that

through this a complete movement was destroyed which, with its demands for equal rights, questioned the traditional gender roles for women and of which the Nazis thought as a 'reservoir' for lesbian women".<sup>39</sup> (Grau 36)

In this 'reservoir', it was assumed, lesbian women had a refuge and platform of likeminded women who also fought for the rights of lesbian women. As part of the Nazi Women's Organizations, however, the influence of these 'subversive elements' on the rest of the population was considered to be minimal. Partly, because of Nazi politics that kept women out of the political sphere and partly because the patriarchal National Socialist 'Volksgemeinschaft' was based on male dominance and oppression. The repercussions of this on the daily life of lesbians and gays may not seem too obvious at first. Consider, however, Sabine Schrader's explanation:

Starting in 1928, for example, regulations were issued against the magazine 'Die Freundin', meaning it couldn't be sold publicly anymore and in some cases it was confiscated. Since female homosexuality couldn't be criminally persecuted censorship was enacted with the justification that the magazine was 'offensive' in content and image. [...]

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<sup>39</sup> "Wurde doch damit eine Bewegung zerstört, die mit ihren Gleichberechtigungsforderungen jene Frauen traditionell zugewiesene Rollen in Frage stellte, und von der die Nationalsozialisten annahmen, daß sie nicht nur ein 'Sammelbecken' für lesbische Frauen darstellte, sondern sich auch am ehesten für deren belange einsetzte".

Throughout the German Reich numerous bars had been closed or were under observation. Although bars with mainly homosexual patrons were still open in big cities, discretion and constant vigilance was needed due to the threat of police raids. Thus, the ‘most important und wide-reaching communication network’ was destroyed. Given that homosexuals are located outside of the normative framework, inconspicuous behavior was advisable even in the time before the Third Reich but became imperative in a totalitarian fascist state.<sup>40</sup> (Schrader 36)

The ‘Gleichschaltung’, therefore, impacted the homosexual community much more than it did any other group of victims. With little means of communicating with each other, lesbians were isolated from likeminded people and as apparently single women exposed to the efforts of making them adhere to traditional women’s roles. Gay men, though also robbed of their community, still had the benefit of being male and thus part of the dominant group. Research has shown that many lesbians and gays entered into marriages of convenience to escape suspicion (cf. Senatsverwaltung 5).

While its is unquestionable that the same mechanisms were also applied to other victim groups, I argue that the result nonetheless was a different one for lesbians. *Invisibility* is the key term that separates lesbian victims from those groups persecuted due to political or racial reasons. Those undesired to join the NSDAP or its female counterparts, the political dissenters, Jews, Gypsies, etc. still belonged to their own group

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<sup>40</sup> “Ab 1928 kam es zum Beispiel zu Verfügungen gegen die Zeitschrift ‘Die Freundin’, das heißt, sie durfte nicht mehr öffentlich verkauft werden, in einigen Fällen wurde sie beschlagnahmt. Da weibliche Homosexualität nicht strafrechtlich geahndet werden konnte, erfolgten die Zensurmaßnahmen mit der Begründung, daß die Zeitung in Bild und Inhalt ‘ärgerniserregend’ sei. [...] Im gesamten Deutschen Reich wurden seitdem zahlreiche Lokale geschlossen oder überwacht. Zwar gab es in den Großstädten weiterhin Lokale mit überwiegend homosexuellem Publikum, doch war fortwährend Diskretion gefordert, da Razzien drohten. Damit war das ‘wichtige und weitverzweigte Kommunikationsnetzwerk zerstört’ Da homosexuelle Menschen den Rahmen der Norm verlassen, war unauffälliges Verhalten auch in der Zeit vor dem dritten Reich für viele ratsam, in einem totalitären faschistischen Staat aber war es unerläßlich”.

and were part of a community, albeit a persecuted one. They were visible because they could not hide the reason for their persecution; the most poignant example of this the Yellow Star that Jews were forced to wear. Visibility and community mean the ability to organize and to some degree actively participate in creating at least a measure of normalcy in a world of chaos. In Holocaust memoirs as well as Holocaust research, authors regularly mention the significance of community for survival. Thus, Lawrence L. Langer writes about Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After* "the immediate threats of Auschwitz led to the creation of a community among Mado and her fellow deportees that may have sustained some of them as memories from their lives prior to the camp faded and vanished" (Langer 352) and Ruth Klüger elaborates in her autobiography *Still Alive*

Susi always thought that my mother saved her life. Certainly, my mother's care and concern saved her from a certain degree of psychic damage: the mental self-neglect that sets in when nobody gives a hoot whether you exist or not. For us, Susi was not only a presence, she was important. And thus she existed for herself, too, simply because my mother made her feel she mattered. Without us she would have remained isolated; with us she was part of a family, and thus valuable. (Klüger 123)

Sinti and Roma relied on community even more due to their life on the margins of society and most of those living in one area or travelling together belonged to close-knit family units. Like Jews, the National Socialist viewed Sinti and Roma as "foreign Gypsy people who are inimical to German national traditions" (Tebbutt 22).<sup>41</sup> Their persecution, likewise, was justified by rhetoric comparable to that used to exterminate Jews, accusing them "of every conceivable misdeed and crime" (Lewy 10) and laws aimed at annihilating their livelihood. One scholar summarized the repercussions of the Nazi laws

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<sup>41</sup> Much like classification of the Jewish people, the Nazis also went to great length to create categories of 'genuine Gypsies' (Z), 'part-Gypsies' (ZM), 'non-Gypsies' (M). Registrations were made "with the deliberate intent of eliminating the 'Gypsies' from the 'German national body'" (Tebbutt 23).

on the Sinti and Roma, they “have had to rely upon subsistence theft to feed their families; thus stealing has become part of the stereotype. Forbidden to use the town pumps or wells, denied water by fearful householders, uncleanness becomes part of the stereotype” (11). In such circumstances their community was often the only safety net that existed.

In sharp contrast to this experience of survival communality, lesbian women were susceptible to braving persecution alone and often in silence. I distinguish the effects on lesbian women from those of gay men as I argue that due to different gender roles lesbian women were more affected by the loss of the subculture. They were “threatened more in their material, economic existence, in their possibility to survive independently and without men” (Hauer 50).<sup>42</sup> Lesbian ways of living often contradicted the National Socialist ideal of a woman’s role in society and made lesbian women prone to discrimination and persecution. Lesbian ‘life scripts’ (*Lebensentwurf*) focused on independence and employment, without being married to a man, giving rise to what Heinrich Himmler propagated as masculinization of women and the potential for homosexuality in men (cf. Schoppmann, *Nationalsozialistische Sexualpolitik* 167). Where homosexual men, by virtue of being male, could still live relatively free of intervention by the government to a certain degree, lesbian women were subject to regulation outside and inside the home *as women*. That they were not included in §175 was largely related to the National Socialists view of female sexuality as passive and not autonomous. Thus, while there wasn’t a unique ‘Lesbian §175’, lesbian women bore the

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<sup>42</sup> “Lesbische Frauen waren starker in ihrer materiellen, ökonomischen Existenz, in der Möglichkeit, eigenständig und ohne Männer zu überleben, bedroht”.

consequences of the Nazi's gender politics. Hence, the fact that their lives did not follow the norms imposed by the Nazis made them vulnerable. "People who did not conform to social norms, yet had not committed any offense, could be branded asocial, an extremely flexible label, and taken into so-called protective custody by the police, without judicial authorization" explains Claudia Schoppmann and adds: "This meant they could be sent to a concentration camp. Anyone who sought to avoid any aspect of the Nazi's claim to power [was] judged to be asocial" (Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* 21). The category 'asocial' was a very versatile one for the National Socialists and encompassed any person accused of behavior deemed unacceptable, from homosexual acts between women to unemployment or homelessness. Measures taken against women classified as asocial included forced sterilization because they were "deemed unworthy of procreation" (Hedgepeth and Saidel 37). Some of those encompassed in this category were "prostitutes, lesbians, and indigents" (38) among others.

The inclusion of lesbian victims in the category 'asocial' must be seen as another fine distinction between the victim groups of the Holocaust discussed so far, which made lesbians an easy target for the Nazis while at the same time contributing to the invisibility of this victim group in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It essentially criminalized not what lesbians were doing but their failure to adhere to the Nazi ideal of a woman. They were not persecuted for 'being' something, as was the case with Jews or Gypsies, but for not acting the way they were expected to.

## Chapter 2 – Memory, Identity, Trauma and History

In this chapter I will examine memory and its influence on identity, both on a collective and individual level. In the context of a lesbian collective memory and identity I will attempt to draw a connection between the representation of lesbian persecution during the Holocaust today and its repercussions in the lesbian community in Germany. In this endeavor I will draw heavily on trauma studies and relations to the experiences communicated by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Situating the persecution of lesbian victims within the bigger picture of Jewish persecution is necessary for an evaluation of the accepted historical narrative of the Holocaust. For, as Simone Veil said about her own silence about her experience in Nazi death camps,<sup>1</sup>

it is often said that the former inmates wanted to forget and preferred not to speak. Doubtless this is true for some, but inexact for most. If I take my own case, I have always been willing to speak, to bear witness, but no one was willing to listen. [...] And the foolishness of some of the questions, the doubt which sometimes met our narrations [...] led us to choose carefully our interlocutors. (qtd. in Wiewiorka 72)

“Memory” from a cultural studies perspective is the process of remembering and the image that is created in the recollection of something, which creates a bridge between the narrative of the past and the future. Memory is, so to speak, a preservation of the past in the future through recounting and recollecting while at the same time belatedly shaping how the future is perceived. As such, memory must be understood as part of history, as

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<sup>1</sup> Simone Veil is a French Lawyer, Holocaust survivor and has served as President of the European Parliament. Not to be confused with French philosopher Simone Weil.



its own kind of history, influenced in its expression first and foremost by what is permissible in the historical discourse at any given time. Far from being a static occurrence, of representing a point in time that has passed, memory – especially traumatic memory – probes societies’ underlying conflict with the unresolved discomforts of history. Thus memory “poses questions to history in that it points to problems that are still alive or invested with emotion and value” (LaCapra 8).

French philosopher Henri Bergson and French social scientist Maurice Halbwachs can be seen as major influences on our modern understanding of memory. Bergson’s book *Matter and Memory* (1913) considers some of the ideas Sigmund Freud drew on in his later *Interpretation of Dreams*. Bergson understood the function of memory to

utilize a past experience for present action (recognition), either through the automatic setting into motion of mechanism adapted to circumstances, or through an effort of the mind that seeks in the past conceptions best able to enter into the present situation. Here the role of the brain is crucial: it will allow only those images to come into being or become actualized that are deemed relevant to the needs of the present. (Ansell-Pearson 66)

Two points in Bergson’s theory are vital for our understanding of memory’s effect on identity and trauma: Memory as perceptions for the basis of actions and the filtering of memories based on the specifics of the present circumstances. The latter, filtering or – more specifically – forgetting and repressing of memory, is one aspect that permeates the boundaries between the narratives of history, trauma and identity. Maurice Halbwachs’ ideas combine Bergson’s theory with a social science component, situating memory within the broader scope of society. For him, memory went beyond the realm of the individual, asserting that “experiences, even of the most private, personal, and intimate nature, are the result of an ongoing dynamic social process” that are “inscribed in a given physical, sociohistorical environment, stored in memory and recollected through

continuous interchanges with significant others or significant groups” (qtd. in Apfelbaum 85). This idea of the collective memory as part of what constitutes history – or what is recognized as history – plays a significant role in comprehending the driving force and problems of having lesbians recognized as victims of the Holocaust. If one group steps forward, which has not been recognized as having been ‘officially persecuted’ under the Nazis – does that not open the door for anyone who wants to claim victimhood? Or, in other words, where does one draw the line between who to accept as victims and who to reject? Collective memory always involves inclusion and exclusion to the degree that the collective conscience and the individual conscience can be reconciled. By questioning the main collective’s expectations and their process of working through memory; the stability – and identity – of said collective is threatened.

## **2.1 Memory and History**

Maurice Halbwachs’ theories already provide a glimpse into the connection between memory and history. It is crucial to remember that memory is not a matter of ‘true’ or ‘false’ but a representation of what makes sense for the present. The nature of memory and forgetting, of ‘false memory’ and repression will be explored in the section “Memory and Trauma”. What is comprised in the collective memory must thus be recognized as an individual’s experiences negotiated with and through a collective. Hence, just as individual and collective memory cannot be judged a true or false representation, history cannot be claimed to be an absolute truth. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History* German philosopher Walter Benjamin critiques the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>

century historians' method of research as a "process of empathy [...] with the victor" (Benjamin 258) which ultimately benefits the ruling class of society. He thus sees the biased and selective side of history simultaneously also as the influence of power on what is represented as history. As a process, however, Benjamin saw a possibility for history to be articulated and recognized not 'as it really was' – for there can be no absolute 'truth' in historiography – but as a chance to capture the fleeting image of the past. These fleeting images are the memories that represent parts of the experiences of a society; they are glimpses of a past that has not yet passed away completely. As such, memory transcends the temporal limits of its construction; it is a reconstruction of the past in the present, meaningful only to those who have access to its frame of reference. Who has access will be determined either by who is in power or by who is within the collective that formed the frame of reference. It is a dual exchange, for "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories" while at the same time being dependent on society to "recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Apfelbaum 85). The relationship between history and memory therefore necessarily has a similar duality in which memory does not only shape history but the historical representations subsequently influence the broader cultural context. Walter Benjamin understood the dangers of this as a distorted form of history or "officially sanctioned forgetting" (Leslie 133).

Perceiving history as officially sanctioned forgetting draws attention to one of the problems that arises when history and memory discourses meet. Memory, with its ties to the individual, with certain subjectivity, clashes with assumptions about history as objective and detached from personal experiences. The present-ness of memory and the past-ness of history seem to be in polar opposition, and history seems "willing to question

the epistemological status of its object of study – the past – but less willing to engage with how ‘the past’ itself is variously conceptualized and constituted as [...] memory” (Hodgkin and Radstone 3). In an encounter between history and memory, the autobiographical, the witness testimony, the personal account is often preferred over history and attributed with ‘truthfulness’ that history apparently lacks. This may explain the attraction of autobiographical accounts with their implicit promise of a true experience, true suffering, and true catharsis. The problem such non-communicated assumptions can cause, especially in regard to the Holocaust, are evident in the public outrage about the ‘fake memoir’ *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* by Benjamin Wilkomirski/Bruno Grosjean in 1995 (German: *Bruchstücke. Aus einer Kindheit 1939-1948*). Hailed as an authentic memoir of a child survivor of the Holocaust his book was deemed a fraud in 1999, a narrative work of fiction. Some critics argued that although the content doesn’t change with such a revelation, the re-categorization from the genre of memoir to that of fiction affects the reader, saying “once the professed interrelationship between the first-person narrator, the death-camp story he narrates, and historical reality are proved palpably false, what was a masterpiece becomes kitsch” (Studien 281). The ‘truth’ that is indirectly anticipated in reference to memory and memories becomes a challenging concept for discourses that embrace both history and memory. Dominick LaCapra argues that the relationship between memory and history is mutual: “Memory is both more and less than history, and vice versa. History may never capture certain elements of memory [...]. Yet history also includes elements that are not

exhausted by memory” (LaCapra 20). In this challenge lies history’s value as a test for what actual memories are, what “is or is not factual in remembrance” (20).<sup>2</sup>

Turning our attention to the way memory and history are represented in memorials and museums elicits similar questions and conflicting opinions that both discourses contend with individually, mainly: what can be remembered and how? From the choice of where to place a memorial to what it should signify one enters into a “struggle over meaning: whose monument is permitted, and what meanings may it convey? And since these sites are also often publicly established [...] they are inescapably implicated in the construction of narratives [...] of national identity” (Hodgkin and Radstone 11). It is at this intersection from theoretical discourse to tangible construction of a place of remembrance that history determines the past and regulates how it should be remembered in the present and future. Ascribed precise historical value, memorials dictate not only who will be remembered and how but also “who should be forgotten, which acts or events are foundational, which marginal; what gets respected, what neglected” (13).

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<sup>2</sup> LaCapra differentiates between primary and secondary memory, with primary memory belonging to one person, unmediated and not processed beyond the experience itself. Secondary memory is what he views as the processed primary experience, either by the one who experienced the event or by a secondary observer (i.e. a historian). Secondary memory involves contextualizing, testing accuracy and relevancy of a memory for the past and future.

## 2.2 Memory and Trauma

A connection between memory and trauma can intuitively be drawn from the understanding of trauma as an event or a series of events that happened in the past but has not been processed and integrated fully into memory. The term ‘trauma’ and ‘traumatic memory’ have become essential concepts in memory studies because it is this memory, which has not been fully processed yet, that is the object of memory studies. To understand the implication of cultural trauma, an excursion into the psychoanalytic realm is necessary. The arbitrary starting point for this will be Sigmund Freud, not because his theories are the first or best – he changed his arguments many times throughout his life – but because most of the cultural trauma discussion is rooted in his concepts. By starting with Freud I will not dwell on his psychoanalytical premises long but provide the basics that help understand what cultural trauma is and how it shapes society.<sup>3</sup>

In his development of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud saw memory as ambivalent in nature precisely because the processing of experiences seemed to him manipulated by a person’s unconscious. In his terms there “is in general no guarantee of the data produced by our memory” (Freud 3:315). While we can thus be sure that recollections of experiences exist, we cannot, according to Freud, know if what we remember is actually what happened. Next to the concept of the unconscious that Freud developed there stands the concept of repression. Repression, that which “is suppressed” but “continues to exist in normal people as well as abnormal, and remains capable of psychical functioning”

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<sup>3</sup> When referring to cultural trauma and the concept of society I denote a system of relations and the organization of such relations within a bigger unit or group. Culture in a society defined like this functions as an element of order. Its values, beliefs and norms (among other elements) create meaning for the society.

(Freud 5:608), are recollections that disrupt memory by resisting processing. The previously mentioned unconscious, an inaccessible part of the mind, is where these disruptive experiences are stored, not forgotten but lying dormant, ready to involuntarily surface and disrupt life in the present. In this way memory – traumatic or not – is not only a means for remembering experiences but also for forgetting or suppressing them. Experiences important for functioning in the present are more likely to be processed and integrated, whereas those that are not important are filtered out and experiences that are non-negotiable at the present time remain in a state of unconscious existence.

With an eye on holocaust studies, LaCapra describes trauma as “a lapse or rupture in memory that breaks continuity with the past, thereby placing identity in question to the point of shattering it” which simultaneously raises “problems of identity for others insofar as it unsettles narcissistic investments and desired self-images” (9). Regardless of the origin of trauma, traumatic memory must hence be understood as equally disrupting to an identity as the inability to process experiences within a group with the same frame of reference. Where in one case a traumatic event stands at the beginning of disrupted memory, the other side represents the inability to process an event that may in itself not have been traumatic. In the end, whether by distortion or by silence, trauma is not processed into memory as an event of the past but crops up again in the present to disrupt and challenge an individual or a collective.

For individual trauma to develop into a collective or cultural trauma several conditions have to be met for which memory is essential:

It must be remembered, or *made to be remembered*. Furthermore the memory must be made culturally relevant, that is represented as obliterating, damaging, or rendering problematic something sacred –

usually a value or outlook felt to be essential to the integrity of the affected society. Finally, the memory must be associated with a strong negative affect, usually disgust, shame, or guilt. (Smelser 36, emphasis added)

The trauma of the Holocaust offers several approaches to this cultural trauma. On the one hand there is the trauma of the victim(s), the group(s) affected by the traumatic events. On the other hand there are the perpetrators and the cultural trauma of the German generation from the 1920s until today.<sup>4</sup> What is made to be remembered today are the German Jews as primary targets of the Nazi extermination machinery, along with other, smaller groups. The sacredness that has been defiled by the National Socialists are such German values like 'Kultur' (culture), 'Aufklärung' (Enlightenment) and 'Ästhetik' (aesthetics), which play an important part in the history of Germany. The memory of the Holocaust for Germans is, finally, guilt-ridden and associated with shame. Or more accurately, it was associated with guilt and shame. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's book *The Inability to Mourn*, published in 1967, describes the silence and inability of the German people to work through and overcome their past in the postwar years until the 1960s. It wasn't until the historic 'Warschauer Kniefall' by German chancellor Willy Brandt that a conversation about the Holocaust was started in earnest. Agnes C. Mueller's 2015 book *The Inability to Love* takes up the themes of guilt and shame, exploring how an inability to mourn the past may have turned into the inability of Germans to have positive relationships with and attachments to Jews against the backdrop of the Holocaust. Expanding from Mitscherlich's approach, Mueller explores

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<sup>4</sup> By this I mean the German generation born before WWII who fought in it, the generation that was born into the Third Reich and was brought up as followers, the immediate post-1945 generation of silence and all subsequent generations who dealt with the trauma of the Holocaust in their own unique ways.



“how and why the relationship between Jews and Germans today continues to be fraught, complex, and at times painful” (Mueller 6).



Figure 2.1: Willy Brandt. Kneeling in Warsaw at the monument for the victims of the ghetto uprising against German occupation  
Hubmann, Hans. "GHDI - Image." *GHDI - Image*. Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2015.

Professor of Macrosociology Bernhard Giesen describes the importance of the kneeling, stating, “this representative confession of collective guilt was no longer relativized by reference to the sufferings of the Germans [...]. Brandt took the burden of the collective guilt of the nation although he was innocent as a person.” Moreover, he “enacted a new narrative that confessed the collective guilt of the German nation with respect to the Jewish victims, to an international public that acted as a third party” (130). Brandt’s kneeling as a public act of humiliation and confession of guilt for the whole German nation paved the way for a narrative about the Holocaust that incorporated traumatic memory and changed the collective cultural trauma narrative away from guilt and shame to repentance and a new beginning. Thus, 25 years after the end of the war, the collective cultural trauma of the Holocaust had finally reached a stage of change.

Predictions from the 1980s say that the next stage means “the stigma will become the theme of stories and histories that can be narrated and represented to an audience that is no longer haunted by personal memories or stigmatized by collective guilt” (Giesen 137).

The stories and histories that can be – or are made to be – remembered now are not the only histories. Along with the generally accepted victim group of the Jews, who are rendered problematic because of the sheer number of deaths and the arbitrariness with which they were persecuted, there are also other victim groups for whom collective cultural trauma status has not been achieved and who thus have no way as a collective to come to terms with their history. An article in *Die Zeit* related to the Holocaust memorial being planned in Berlin summarizes the dilemma society faces in deciding how to memorialize the trauma of the Holocaust:

From a memorial for Jews only it must follow that we also need to build appropriate memorials for all other groups of victims. [...] Every solution outside of such a variety of monuments would be dishonest. But so far only lip service has been paid to tolerance. For none of the other victim groups a government initiative or private pressure group exists, as if their dead were dead of inferior rank, which can be more easily left to fade into oblivion. It is the macabre irony of this second solution that we continue to adhere to the categories of prisoners of the SS, who pitted all groups defined as x or y against each other in the concentration camps. If we accept only the memorial for the Jews, then it irrefutably means we are creating a hierarchy of monuments based on number of victims, in which the influence of survivors of the Nazi killings stipulates the categories of death and writes in stone their magnitude.<sup>5</sup> (Koselleck)

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<sup>5</sup> “Aus einem Denkmal nur für die Juden allein folgt zwingend, daß wir für alle anderen Opfergruppen entsprechende Denkmäler errichten müssen. [...] Jede Lösung unterhalb dieser Vielfalt von Denkmälern wäre verlogen. Doch bisher ist es nur bei Lippenbekenntnissen zur Toleranz geblieben. Für keine der anderen Opfergruppen gibt es eine staatliche Initiative oder private Gruppen, als seien ihre Toten Tote minderen Ranges, die eher der Vergessenheit anheimgegeben werden dürfen. Es ist die makabre Ironie dieser zweiten Lösung, daß wir uns weiterhin an die Häftlingskategorien der SS halten, die in den Konzentrationslagern alle so oder so definierten Gruppen gegeneinander ausspielte. Akzeptieren wir einmal das Denkmal nur für die Juden, dann

Koselleck raises an interesting question in his article concerning not only how to commemorate victim groups and their suffering but also that many victim groups do not have the means to lobby for themselves. Examples for his thesis of having to commemorate the Holocaust with one memorial are that “there is no reason to let the people killed as Slavic subhuman beings fade into oblivion. Numerically their number is higher than the ones of Jews and other groups. Around three million non-Jewish Poles died” and that, likewise, there is no moral or political reason to exclude the hostages shot all over Europe, sometimes entire villages including women and children (Koselleck).<sup>6</sup> Who is included and excluded from the memory of the Holocaust also influences the present and future identity of an individual and a collective. Along with the memory that is created, reconstituted, erased, passed down to the following generation or lost in the folds of history, consequences arise for identity formation.

In this context, a speech by German Federal President Joachim Gauck given in commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 offers pertinent insight into what present or future German identity Gauck imagines, based on the interrelatedness of Holocaust history and a collective memory. The title of his speech “No German identity without Auschwitz” (Keine deutsche Identität ohne Auschwitz) is also the quintessence, in which Joachim Gauck extrapolates the historic guilt of the German people but also their willingness to “make the confrontation with the

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erhebt sich daraus unentrinnbar jene oft zitierte Denkmalshierarchie, die je nach Zahl der Ermordeten und je nach Einfluß der Überlebenden die nazistischen Tötungskategorien festschreibt und in unterschiedlichen Größenordnungen versteinert”.

<sup>6</sup> “so gibt es keinen zwingenden Grund, die als slawische Untermenschen umgebrachten Menschen der Vergessenheit auszusetzen. Rein numerisch übersteigen deren Zahl bei weitem die der Juden und anderer Gruppen”.

crimes of the past a core of their historical narrative” (“Deutsche Identität” 1).<sup>7</sup> He then addresses critical voices of those who believe that there is a generational difference and the possibility of forgetting in the younger generation. While he does admit there will be changes in the way things will be remembered, he is also quite sure that the Holocaust will not be forgotten,

’[e]ven if the Holocaust isn’t a core element of German identity for all citizens anymore one thing remains for sure: There is no German identity without Auschwitz.’ Remembering the Holocaust is a matter of all German citizens. ‘It is part of the history of our country.’<sup>8</sup> (2)

Upon closer examination one must interpret this speech twofold: It is a fitting example for the way history is conflated into a narrative of collective memory while at the same time illustrating the dynamics of memory work which seem to be in play only in Germany. In his work *The Texture of Memory* James E. Young observed about memorial culture – and thus the metaphorical and literal fossilization of memory – in Germany that it is ambiguous and surprising. “While the victors of history have long erected monuments to their triumphs and victims have built memorials to their martyrdom, only rarely does a nation call upon itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated” (Young 21). As such, Gauck’s insistence on the centrality of the Holocaust for the identity of the future German nation is contextualized within the framework of German guilt. He attempts to create a collective narrative of the Holocaust spanning more than 70 years and multiple generations. In admitting that there has been a working-through of the

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<sup>7</sup> “die Konfrontation mit den Verbrechen der Vergangenheit zu einem Kernbestand ihrer Geschichtserzählung gemacht”.

<sup>8</sup> “‘Und mag der Holocaust auch nicht mehr für alle Bürger zu den Kernelementen deutscher Identität zählen, so gilt doch weiterhin: Es gibt keine deutsche Identität ohne Auschwitz.’ Die Erinnerung an den Holocaust bleibe eine Sache aller Bürger, die in Deutschland leben. ‘Er gehört zur Geschichte dieses Landes’”.

guilt and shame of the war crimes he calls Germany a “believable partner for a peaceful and equal cohabitation of citizens and nations” (“Deutsche Identität” 1).<sup>9</sup> There is a discrepancy in his idea of a German nation that swiftly and freely practices *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which ignores even the rather recent struggles that on the surface had nothing to do with the German National Socialist past. The move of the government from Bonn back to Berlin (1994-1999), for example, created similar ambivalence to finding a new national holiday after the reunification of East and West Germany.<sup>10</sup> The collective memory has established an image of Germany that will have to change in the individual memory of the future generation to truly lead to a new national identity.

## 2.3 Memory and Identity

Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) has, as mentioned before, been the major influence for our modern understanding of memory from a social science perspective. The importance of his hypothesis about individual memory and collective memory as constituents of a social framework has widely been accepted among social scientists and historians. His epistemological position on the nature of memory is grounded in the context of the dialectical relations that exist between individual and collective memory.

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<sup>9</sup> “zum glaubwürdigen Partner für ein friedvolles und gleichberechtigtes Zusammenleben von Bürgern und Nationen”.

<sup>10</sup> Options that were discussed, according to James E. Young, were May 8<sup>th</sup> (1945) as the rebirth of the nation, July 20<sup>th</sup> (1944), which marked the unsuccessful assassination attempt on Hitler, or November 9<sup>th</sup>. While November 9<sup>th</sup> could have been perfect as a commemoration for the beginning of the Weimar Republic (1918) or the day the German people broke through the Berlin Wall (1989), it was also the day of Kristallnacht (1938).

Within the framework of a group an individual recalls experiences and processes, integrating them into the collective memory of the group. Thus “the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of reconstructing their past” and to form a collective memory since “society can live only if there is sufficient unity of outlooks among the individuals and groups comprising it” (Apfelbaum 83). Halbwachs’ idea of the collective is rooted in his sociologist understanding that no individual lives in isolation.

In his essay *On Collective Memory* he reasoned

one is rather astonished when reading psychological treatises that deal with memory to find that people are considered isolated beings. These make it appear that to understand our mental operations, we need to stick to individuals and first of all, to divide all the bonds which attach individuals to the society of their fellow. Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. (Halbwachs 38)

Individual memories are therefore also always part of a social process in the measure that they are processed, shaped, questioned and evaluated through the exchange with others.

These ‘others,’ just like the individual himself, contribute recollections to a collective memory with shared references and definitions that can “reappear [...] because at each moment society processes the necessary means to reproduce them” (183). Individual identity, derived from individual experiences, thus depends on membership in a group for validation and legitimization. It furthermore means that as an individual’s affiliation with one group changes, memory may be ascribed different values according to the new framework. If no referential framework exists, however, individual experiences will become non-communicable and, depending on the group’s collective memory, may remain invisible. Simone Weil’s quote at the beginning of this chapter illustrates this invisibility and silence in a collective that does not have a frame of reference for her

experience. Without a frame of reference against which to process and recollect memories, an individual's sense of identity will be disturbed. In light of the silence and opposition to recognizing the persecution of lesbian victims during the Holocaust, two things stand to reason: (1) that the collective memory lacks a shared frame of reference as it exists for other victim groups and (2) that a lesbian collective has been denied the legitimization to process its memory of the Holocaust. Benjamin's 'empathy with the victor' becomes empathy with those who are validated as witnesses for the Holocaust by having been officially classified as undesirables in the politics of the National Socialists.

Processing individual memory as well as collective memory and bearing witness is dependent not only on a shared frame of reference but also on language. The problem of what the sign 'lesbian' means now and what it meant for the women living as women-loving women during the Third Reich demonstrates the limitations for individual recollections to become part of the collective memory. What is perceived as 'lesbian' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Who identifies as 'lesbian'? Is 'lesbian' evident only and reduced to a sexual act? Is it a lifestyle? Queer theorists have been exploring questions like these for the past 20 years. Some answers to these questions lie in our use of language, in de Saussure's triad of what signifier and signified are compounded in what sign. Much of the invisibility of lesbian life and lesbian persecution remains due to a lack of language to express lesbian experience. In a heteronormative world, the term 'girlfriend' only denotes romantic love when uttered by a male, ascribing a platonic relationship when used by a woman to refer to a female friend. Any ambiguity of language is therefore dependent on the collective that shapes and processes the experience of the individual. Within the constraints set by the collective an experience can thus be perceived differently than how

the individual memory recollects it. I would argue, however, that within one collective the passing of time can change a linguistic frame of reference, making it possible for different collectives to overlap.

In a reflection of the interviews she conducted with female ‘lesbian’ witnesses of the Holocaust Claudia Schoppmann concluded:

quite a few women-loving women especially of the older generation cannot or do not want to identify with the term [lesbian] that still has a negative connotation today and which marks them as outsiders. Lesbian experience varies from culture to culture, era to era and individual to individual. It is naturally impossible to determine for time and eternity what the historically modern term ‘lesbian’ means, especially due to the ways it has been studied [...] by sexology.<sup>11</sup> (Schoppmann, *Zeit der Maskierung* 27)

In a collective memory that excludes lesbian existence as experienced by lesbian women and denies a positive language for an individuals’ experiences and memories, it is not only the individual that is silenced but the collective that shares these experiences. As a consequence an individual’s identity, which would have been negotiated within and against the collective identity of the group, is missing. I would argue that part of the inaccessibility of knowledge about lesbian life and persecution during the Third Reich stems from the fact that they disappeared under the sign ‘woman’ with the stigma ‘asocial.’ Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone summarize this in *Contested Pasts. The Politics of Memory*, stating “Meaning is always part of a system of symbol and

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<sup>11</sup> “viele frauenliebende Frauen insbesondere der älteren Generation können oder wollen sich mit diesem bis heute negative belegten Begriff [lesbisch], der sie zu Außenseiterinnen abstempelt, nicht identifizieren. Lesbische Erfahrung variiert von Kultur zu Kultur, von Epoche zu Epoche und von Individuum zu Individuum. Natürlich ist es unmöglich, für alle Zeiten verbindlich festzulegen, was der historisch modern und durch die Sexualwissenschaft stark pathologisierte Begriff ‘lesbisch’ bedeutet”.



metaphor, and in the absence of such a system, memories cannot acquire meaning” (Hodgkin and Radstone 98).

The concept of identity can be traced from the enlightenment until today as different versions and emphases towards a ‘project’ of the self, a conscious – or unconscious – undertaking to produce an image of the self that the individual wants to be. In 1570 the term ‘identity’ was recorded for the first time as signifying “the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness” (Benwell and Stokoe 18). The idea that identity is exactly and only one, excludes what I will term fragmented identities, those identities that remain after trauma because traumatic memory could not be integrated successfully.<sup>12</sup> Such an enlightenment idea was situated in the turn to reason and science and away from the medievalist belief in class hierarchy. There was limited exclusion to the principle of identity, as it was perceived to be grounded in reason; there was no distinguishing marker set between a queen or a maidservant to have the ability and right of engaging in the project of the self.<sup>13</sup> From the enlightenment period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the outlook on identity changed with the romantic movement of

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<sup>12</sup> When I use the term fragmented identities, I am not referring to the clinical diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID, formerly Multiple Personality Disorder). Although the definition of DID is similar to the idea of a failure of integration of traumatic memory after trauma, the key difference is that in DID the fragmented identities are seen as distinct personalities. One diagnostic criterion from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM-5) is a “Disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality parts. This disruption may be observed by others, or reported by the patient” (American Psychiatric Association 300.14). Disruption as described here refers to behavior of a person, whereas the fragmentation of identity that I discuss is the failure in the mental process to create an image of oneself that successfully integrates ones memories.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault’s theories are examples for the extensive work that has been done in this field.

the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Romanticism classified the development and search for the self as “an expression of something innate, but predicated on sensibility and feeling rather than cognition” that was part of the very nature of self-expression necessary for humanity, “an extension of, or in harmony with, the self” (Benwell and Stokoe 19). This romanticist view of identity as something natural, a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy of the self, is still discernible today in our understanding that there is an ‘authentic’ true self. This ‘authentic’ identity, however, has lost the character of harmony with the self and is instead understood as static. It has become one ‘authentic’ identity, which cannot change.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the identity discourse changed to a medical discourse, as evidenced by Sigmund Freud’s research of psychoanalysis and psychosocial behavior. Freud’s ideas about the unconscious and the approach of psychoanalysis to uncover the hidden truths of the self alter the previously mentioned idea of identity as a project of the *self* into an act of mediation between an other and the self. This reverses the idea of the natural self but takes up the angle of reflexivity that could be found during the Enlightenment era. Reflexivity – within the psychodynamic framework – was used by French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan, whose essays on the Mirror Stage identify unconscious identity formation in infants. He surmised that between the age of 6-18 months an infant will be fascinated with mirrors and through them “is able to conceive of itself as a whole, but simultaneously ‘other’ or alien. This imposes a comforting illusion of unity, coherence and distinctiveness” (Benwell and Stokoe 21). Lacan’s theory is not only applicable to infants but, when using ‘mirrors’ in a metaphorical sense as the community, culture and society around us, also serves as an evocative example of how memory (both individual and collective) forms identity. Once ‘I’ see the memory that ‘I’

have as both my individual memory and the ‘other’ collective memory, ‘I’ can understand that my identity is based on both; ‘I’ need the ‘alien’ other to complete the identity that makes me distinctive. For an individual ‘me’ only exists through the distinct memory that ‘I’ have in conjunction and coherence with the collective memory of society. Memory therefore serves as a validator for an individual’s experience as much as that of the collective and with that also initiates identity formation in an individual. The question ‘Who am I?’ can be answered from three angles of identity formation theory used in the field of developmental psychology. On an individual level, identity means

aspects of self-definition at the level of the individual person. These may include goals, values, and beliefs, religious and spiritual beliefs, standards for behavior and decision-making, self-esteem and self-evaluation, desired, feared, and expected future selves, and one’s overall ‘life story.’ [...] Theories of personal identity tend to focus especially on individual-level processes, often emphasizing the agentic role of the individual in creating or discovering his or her own identity. (Schwartz et al., 3)

The enlightenment and romantic notion of the *process* of the self is emphasized here by the conscious decision-making that is taking place in part of the decisions. While I would argue, however, that not all of these aspects of self-definition are conscious – values and self-esteem are often unconsciously learned and copied from parents and role models rather than consciously chosen – the idea of a ‘life-story’ as a framework highlights the continuity and fluidity of identity.

The second approach is situated between the individual and the collective identity and connects the two of them. The relational identity defines processes and approaches as

located within interpersonal space, within families, or in the roles that one plays within a larger system. A common theme in these perspectives is that identities cannot be established by individuals on their own – claims

to a particular identity need to be recognized by a social audience if they are to be secure. (3)

The central information in this quotation is the caution that identities cannot be established in isolation, and that there needs to be an entity against which one's identity can be defined and by which it needs to be recognized. For lesbian women during the Nazi era, this meant official non-existence and social invisibility, as the National Socialist society did not recognize their identity as valid. Although their own identity self-evaluation classified them as lesbian women, for the authorities they appeared only as women and often with the addenda asocial or inferior. Hence, the only role that lesbian women could play in the Nazi society if they wanted to survive was that of the adapted, dutiful German woman and housewife.

The third and last angle from which to approach identity formation is the collective identity, which is understood as an individual's

identification with the groups and social categories to which they belong, the meanings that they give to these social groups and categories, and the feelings, beliefs, and attitudes that result from identifying with them. (4)

Here, too, we can draw on Maurice Halbwachs' concept of dialectical relations between individual and a collective memory that has the basis for the collective to highlight what the identification with social groups and categories means. Collective memory creates the group that an individual can relate to because of shared memory. Identification with the group creates meaning beyond that memory and leads to the formation of a belief system and of viewing the world in certain terms, which, in turn, creates more shared individual and collective memory.

It is in the intermediate stage between the individual and the collective identity, however, that the role of memory comes into play the most and has to be negotiated. The question of who is included and excluded from memory as discussed in the introduction to this chapter directly impacts if – or how – an individual can establish a sense of identity against this backdrop. I would like to add here that the terminus *establish* is in my opinion appropriately descriptive in the context of discussing identity, whether sexual, religious, or personal. To establish something denotes active participation, making something stable. Contrary to the opinion that sexual orientation begins with the *choice* an individual makes, which is then manifested as identity I would argue that at the beginning of the process stands the realization of sexuality. This process can be broken down into three steps. First the heterosexual will become aware of their feelings for members of the opposite sex. They may then choose to act on these feelings and, as their actions are accepted or valued, their sexual identity will be established. It is a progression from *realization* to *choice* and lastly identity *formation*. All this will be negotiated within and against the collective they have access to. Thus the ambiguity of minority identities can partly be traced to the tradition, knowledge and memory, which are nurtured.

Philosopher William S. Wilkerson writes about the confusion inherent in the triplicity of this concept, that

in our contemporary situation, an individual who has not yet come out lives in a confusion where heterosexuality is strongly encouraged and homosexuality discouraged. Developing an identity requires one to interpret this confusion and compose it into a coherent pattern. The identity thus formed reflects back upon this process and changes the feelings themselves. The social interaction that structures experience presents possibilities for identity that allow the feelings to be patterned and interpreted in light of social roles. This means that individuals involve themselves in the process of composing their feelings as they interpret

their desires and understand their relation to social circumstances.  
(Wilkerson 88)

Social circumstances and social roles may change depending on what example of identity one is looking at. The overall result, however, is the same for the Jewish woman in search of a home within her faith community as a feminist as well as the female Holocaust survivor without the ability to mourn because 'lesbian' is not a recognized Holocaust victim identity. It requires one to interpret the confusion of the past and the present in order to bring it into a cohesive whole. Collective memory of lesbian persecution can therefore only be established once the unrecognized and invisible lesbian victims are made visible, represented, and included in the Holocaust discourse.

### Chapter 3 – Lesbian Persecution in Historical Representations

To show historical representations of lesbian persecution I have picked a selection of different life narratives to show how lesbian persecution was evident between 1933 and 1945. Hilde Radusch serves as an example of a leading communist who was persecuted by the Nazis, survived in hiding with her girlfriend and became a driving force in the 1970s lesbian movement. Honored with a memorial site in front of her last home, the commemorative plaques are introduced in an accompanying TV clip as “the first memorial site in Berlin for a lesbian woman persecuted during National Socialism” (*Immer Kämpferin, Nicht Opfer*. 00:49).<sup>1</sup>

The documentary hybrid novel *Aimée & Jaguar* is an attempt at reconstructing the life that Elisabeth Wust and Felice Schragenheim shared for a brief year before the latter was deported to a concentration camp in 1942/43. Written by Erica Fischer, the novel is a collection of narrative, interviews, diary entries, and legal documents that challenges currently held beliefs about the way lesbian persecution is portrayed and understood. In light of the different nature of the relationships between the interviewees and Lilly or Felice, respectively, the interpretation of persecution and lesbianism – and lesbian persecution – will change throughout the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> “Es ist der erste Gedenkort für eine im Nationalsozialismus verfolgte lesbische Frau in Berlin”.

The book *Zeit der Masquerade (Life of Masquerade)* is a compendium of interviews with ten women who identified as lesbian during the Nazi era and survived to tell their stories. I have excluded the first, Hilde Radusch's, account from this book and included it instead in my analysis of Radusch as a standalone example based on archival research. Selecting these accounts over others is a choice born of the aspiration to include the lesser-known and unknown counterparts to the movie *Aimée & Jaguar* or prominent figures like Hilde Radusch in order to gain more puzzle pieces to the still incomplete picture of what lesbian persecution during the Holocaust looked like for women of different walks of life.

I have deliberately excluded memoirs from concentration camp survivors in this analysis, as the majority of them describe lesbian behavior within the camps from the outsider perspective of heterosexual onlookers.<sup>2</sup> What was perceived in the camps, however, must be understood in relation to the surroundings it was observed in. The caring or loving behavior of two women towards each other under the duress of life-threatening circumstances does not necessarily constitute lesbian sexual orientation. Similarly, the negativity with which such witnessed lesbian acts and/or behavior is mostly portrayed oftentimes says more about the social attitude of that time rather than the degree of persecution lesbian prisoners were subjected to. It would go beyond the

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<sup>2</sup> Negative and stigmatizing examples can be found in Krystyna Zywulska's *Wo früher Birken waren – Überlebensbericht einer jungen Frau aus Auschwitz-Birkenau*, Fania Fénelon's *Mädchenorchester in Auschwitz*, and Simha Naor's *Krankengymnastik in Auschwitz. Aufzeichnungen des Häftlings Nr. 80574*. More positive are Anja Lundholm's *Das Höllentor* and Luce D'Eramo's *Der Umweg*.



scope of this dissertation to include the distinct and intricate themes of these particular accounts as well.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 Hilde Radusch

Since 2012, visitors walking through Berlin Schöneberg and reaching the corner of Eisenacher Straße/Winterfeldtstraße will find three commemorative plaques dedicated to the memory of Hilde Radusch, “the first memorial site that commemorates a lesbian woman” (Vehling).<sup>4</sup> The three tall plaques show a portrait of Radusch with the quote “I



Figure 3.1: Hilde Radusch Memorial  
Meusen, Isabel. *Hilde Radusch Memorial, Berlin*. 2014. Photograph. Private Collection.  
N.p.

never felt like a woman... but don't ask me as what else",<sup>5</sup> the stylized outline of her head beside her poem *We walk the way*, and her name printed in bold next to a spiral of keywords and phrases.

<sup>3</sup> A good starting point for those interested to know more about the portrayal of female homosexuality in autobiographical accounts of female camp survivors is the German article “Es war verpönt, aber das gab's” (Meier). It will shed more light on the special topics that need to be addressed when analyzing the netherworld of camp life.

<sup>4</sup> “der erste Gedenkort, der an eine lesbische Frau erinnert”.

<sup>5</sup> “Ich habe mich nie als Frau gefühlt... aber frage mich nicht, als was sonst”.

Hilde Radusch, born 1903, was 18 when she left her hometown of Weimar and moved to Berlin in 1921. Away from the conservative influence of her parents, she joined the communist youth group and later the KPD (German Communist Party). Her political interest and attitude led her to write articles for the *Frauenwacht*, a magazine for communist girls and young women (Schoppmann, *Zeit der Maskierung* 35). Radusch worked at the telecommunications office Berlin, after her training as a kindergarten teacher at the Pestalozzi-Fröbel-House failed to provide her with employment in the field. It is there that she met her first girlfriend and noticed that she was “different than the others” (Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* 31). As an emancipated woman and a political activist, she was elected to the workers council and, as one of the few government employees who was also a member of the communist party, she aroused interest. She was only 26 when the communist party “honors her success with a nomination for the Berlin city council assembly, which she [was] part of from 1929 – 1932” (Netzwerk Frauengeschichte vor Ort).<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of April in 1933, the National Socialists arrested her for her communist activities, and six months passed in different prisons under ‘protective custody’ until she was released.

Hilde Radusch’s political activities as a communist overshadow and dominate the perception of her as a woman identifying and living as a lesbian. The ‘protective custody’ she was subjected to in 1933 ended the relationship to the girlfriend she had at the telecommunications office. In an effort to avoid more harassment by the Nazis and because “at that time everybody was as faithful as never before; lesbian life basically

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<sup>6</sup> “honorierte diesen Erfolg mit ihrer Nominierung für die Berliner Stadtverordnetenversammlung, der sie von 1929 bis 1932 angehörte”.

only took place in a relationship” (Schoppmann, *Zeit der Maskierung* 37),<sup>7</sup> it wasn’t until 1939, when Hilde Radusch was 36 years old, that she met the woman she would spend the rest of her life with. Moving around to avoid the Gestapo and SS, she had just settled in a new apartment when she met one of her neighbors, severely handicapped Else ‘Eddy’ Klopsch. Soon the neighbors were getting to know each other and became more than friends. In order to stay under the radar of the Nazis and not endanger Eddy, Hilde Radusch ceased her official communist activities and stayed in the background helping Eddy to create a private ‘Mittagstisch,’ a restaurant where no alcohol is served. In her personal documents, not many references can be found relating to this time beyond innocuous matters of what needed to be organized or what official appointments either of them had.<sup>8</sup> This can easily be understood as a security measure against the National Socialists in case any of her written material was seized and pertained to signs of her sexual orientation and relationship with Eddy, as well as the illegal communist activities she was still involved in. In August 1944, warned by a friend of Eddy’s, the couple fled to a small town about 45 minutes south of Berlin.

This incident is significant for an analysis of the reasons of Hilde Radusch’s persecution by the Nazis. The event that preceded the couple’s flight was a warning by

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<sup>7</sup> “Damals waren alle so treu wie noch nie; das lesbische Leben spielte sich praktisch nur in der Partnerschaft ab.”

<sup>8</sup> During my research I spent two weeks in the archives at the Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs-, und Informationszentrum (FFBIZ), which holds the complete estate of Hilde Radusch. I concentrated on documents from 1933-1945 in my research, especially diaries, calendars, and letters. In addition, I read excerpts from unpublished short stories, poems and correspondence relating to the interview(s) Radusch gave to Claudia Schoppmann for her book *Time of Masquerade* and the makers of the documentary film *Muss es denn gleich beides sein* (“Does it have to be both at once”), Petra Haffter and Pieke Piermann.

someone who worked at the police and knew of the order Heinrich Himmler had given on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1944 as part of what is known as “Aktion Gewitter” (“Mission Thunderstorm”; Reiter 73). As retribution for the unsuccessful attack on Hitler on July 20<sup>th</sup>, all political enemies and especially members of the former communist and socialist parties were to be taken into ‘protective custody’ and were later sent to concentration camps. As a KPD member Hilde Radusch could well have been among the approximately 5,000 arrested sent to Dachau, Neuengamme, or Ravensbrück (Becker and Studt 191). Although both she and Eddy fled, it was not their lesbian relationship that caused the problem. “In principal, Eddy could have stayed and kept managing the restaurant but then she would have been asked where I am. They could have beaten her to death but she would never have said anything” recalls Radusch in an interview (Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* 37). Hilde’s affiliation with communism, not their relationship, made Eddy a possible accessory and target for Nazi persecution. Given that this had happened before when Eddy applied for permits to open her restaurant and was dismissed by the SS with references to the “woman she lives with who ‘isn’t politically correct’” (38), it seemed safer for both of them to go into hiding.

Hilde and Eddy survived in their hiding place outside of Königs Wusterhausen near Berlin. After the War in 1945, Hilde started working for the Berlin district offices in the department for the ‘Victims of Fascism.’ When she decided to leave the newly reformed KPD because her own political ideas had grown and differed from what she saw as the new communism, it was the leadership of the communist party that denounced her as a lesbian to her employer and caused her to lose her job at the district offices. It is in this official file, quoted earlier, in which Hilde Radusch saw the word ‘lesbian’ for the

first time in 1946. Claudia Schoppmann's biographical narrative about Hilde Radusch ends after another paragraph, briefly mentioning her involvement in the founding of the lesbian group L74 and her interest in other feminist-political causes.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, then, the only very explicit experience of persecution due to her lesbian sexual orientation that stands out did not come from the side of the National Socialists but by some of her communist 'comrades' in 1946. Radusch herself does not include her lesbian identity either when talking about the time of persecution between 1939 and 1945 in the documentary *Muss es denn gleich beides sein!* The title, with the strong and somewhat defiant exclamation mark, already hints at the uncompromising woman the viewer is bound to meet in the following 45 minutes. Filmed in 1985, Hilde Radusch is 81 years old, talks about politics, changing ideals, and her life.<sup>10</sup> She comes across as masculine, the stereotypical 'butch' with short hair, flannel shirt and a deep voice with raspy undertone from cigarette smoke. Her tone is engaging, her mind sharp and when she loses herself in a politically inspired answer the viewer can imagine why she was voted city council assembly member at an early age. Yet, throughout the documentary, and although the interviewer asks questions which could possibly lead away from politics and to her personal life, she keeps up a wall. Does it have to be both at once? The title becomes a question: Does it have to be about the political and the

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<sup>9</sup> "L74" or "Group L74" stands for "Lesbos" and the founding year 1974. It was a group founded by and for older lesbians in Berlin as a way to counter the movement of the younger lesbian generation with different ideas and utopias. Hilde Radusch was part of L74 and also wrote articles and poems for their magazine *UkZ – Unsere kleine Zeitung* which was published for 26 years from 1975-2001 (cf. Lenz 125).

<sup>10</sup> I was fortunate to be able to view the documentary at the archive of the FFBIZ in Berlin but have been unable to acquire a copy of it. I can thus only rely on the notes I took and my impressions while seeing the film but will not be able to give detailed quotations.

personal at the same time? And in its original title with the exclamation mark at the end it turns into a resolute answer: No! No, it does not have to be about the personal when the more important one is the political. That, at least, is the interpretation one takes away from the documentary in which Radusch exhibits an obvious lack of identification as a lesbian. Although she is revered as a lesbian woman, was very active in the lesbian movement, few of her own written records or what has been recorded of her go into detail about her life as a woman living with and loving a woman. Persecution as a lesbian always takes second place after her persecution as a member of the communist party. I would argue that this part of her identity did not factor into her life until after she gave up her political identity as a communist. In losing – or leaving – one identity behind she created a void, which she filled with activities directed towards and benefitting the identity bestowed on her later, that of a lesbian woman. It is no surprise that the death of Else Klopsch in the 1960s and Hilde Radusch's new-found enthusiasm for the budding women and lesbian movement fall closely together. This, however, creates a conflict in recognizing Radusch as a lesbian persecuted because of her sexual orientation during the Holocaust. Ilona Scheidle, one of the members of the initiative Netzwerk Miss Marples Schwestern that fought for the memorial site, illustrates her own reasons for seeing Radusch as a victim:

The meaning [of the memorial] is that she was persecuted as a political person but she lived as a lesbian and after 1945 her lesbian orientation was one very important aspect that brought political conflict between her and the [KPD]. After '46 she left the party in protest, she just does not fit in any one box.<sup>11</sup> (*Immer Kämpferin, nicht Opfer*. 30)

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<sup>11</sup> "Die Bedeutung ist eben, sie ist verfolgt als politische aber sie hat lesbisch gelebt und nach 1945 war ihre lesbische Orientierung eben auch ein Punkt wo es zu politischen

Scheidle's differentiation between lesbian victims of the Holocaust and lesbian persecution during the Holocaust is an important one to note as it potentially rationalizes the opposing positions, which have hitherto been described. The initiative for a Hilde Radusch memorial site arose against the background of the debates surrounding the monument for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust. It can be seen as a successful attempt to include lesbian women in the victim narrative of the Holocaust or, if one were to take up Ilona Scheidle's words, it is a memorial for a woman who was persecuted during the Holocaust and happened to be a lesbian. The words on the commemorative plaque that spiral inward from Radusch's name are a good indicator for which interpretation is the more accurate one. Starting with 'Lateral thinker' it moves on to 'Lesbian', 'switchboard operator' and 'KPD' among others. Her political, social, sexual identities are included along with achievements like 'survived in hiding 1944/45' or 'Lesbian Group L74.' The information flyer printed for the dedication of the memorial site states that it serves as a contrast to the official 'Homomonument' in Tiergarten Park with and in which "women were again to be forgotten or rather excluded" (Netzwerk Frauengeschichte vor Ort).<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the other women analyzed in this chapter, Hilde Radusch is commemorated and remembered today as a communist lesbian woman who was persecuted by the Nazis and survived. For the lesbian movement, the fact that her sexual orientation was known to the SS and used against her girlfriend to deny work permits counts as evidence for further discrimination and possible deportation had they both not

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Auseinandersetzungen mit der Partei gegeben hat [sic]. Sie ist dann '46 auch ausgetreten aus Protest, sie passt in keine Schublade rein".

<sup>12</sup> "Wieder einmal sollten Frauen vergessen bzw. ausgegrenzt werden".

left Berlin and gone into hiding. Her identity as a lesbian and persecution as a woman, I would argue, is thus claimed for the collective memory of lesbian life during the Holocaust without fully contextualizing the influence of her political identity.



Figure 3.2: H. Radusch “Words”. Commemorative plaque at the memorial site for Hilde Radusch in Berlin-Schöneberg.  
Netzwerk Frauengeschichte vor Ort. “Hilde Radusch Gedenkort”, 2012: n. pag. Print.

### 3.2 Aimée & Jaguar

The documentary novel *Aimée & Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943* by Erica Fischer was published in German in 1994 and translated to English in 1995. A mixture between a fictional novel and a documentary novel, Erica Fischer relied on memories provided by surviving main characters or their relatives and interspersed her story with accounts from them. Adding these ‘truths’ or ‘facts’ to her story, in conjunction with the use of documents that survived until 1994, she created a narrative hybrid that more fully



engages readers as it facilitates believability. The previous examination of the problems associated with authenticity in memory is helpful here as well, as similar issues arise in representations of memory. Genre expectations, among others, influence how the reader views and identifies with the text. While Fischer's technique is not new, it remains a highly successful strategy.

The story of *Aimée & Jaguar* is set in Berlin and begins with Inge Wolf, who is looking for a household for an internship year. German Nazi housewife Lilly Wust offers Inge that chance and soon her life is transformed by the people Lilly meets through Inge, especially Felice Schrader/Schragenheim, whom she falls in love with. Later, Lilly learns that Felice is Jewish. The reader is then taken back to Felice's childhood and youth, as Fischer tells her life story up to the point she first stays with Lilly for the night. Her Jewishness, persecution of Jews in general, and how she is affected are explored, before Fischer weaves both storylines together again. In an apparently organic progression, the reader subsequently follows Lilly and Felice along as they live their life among Germans but become ostensibly disconnected from the National Socialist ideology and the war that is happening around them. The last 100 pages of the novel are part Lilly's diary entries, part personal accounts, part narrative and explain what happened to Lilly after Felice is deported.<sup>13</sup> The appendix includes pictures, postcards, and legal documents pertaining to Felice's and Lilly's time together.

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<sup>13</sup> It needs to be noted here and will be of interest later on that the 311 pages of the book (excluding the appendix) can be divided into 64 pages about Lilly and Felice, 60 pages Felice's life story, roughly 80 pages of Lilly and Felice living together and the last 100 pages being exclusively about Lilly and the time after Felice was deported (these numbers refer to the German edition).

The first thing to address before analyzing the documentary novel is the preface to the German paperback edition of 1998, which does not appear in the available English translation. With reference to the movie based on her book that was about to be released, Fischer recapped the accomplishments of her book to give “young people the opportunity to deal with National Socialism through such a haunting singular fate” (Fischer, *Aimee & Jaguar. Eine Liebesgeschichte* 11).<sup>14</sup> She attributes Lilly’s “end of isolation”<sup>15</sup> (12) as a closeted lesbian to her new-found fame and delineates how lesbian women write her because they identify with her and “married women who feel the need to tell her about their secret love for a woman” (12).<sup>16</sup> In Fischer’s words Lilly has become the mother confessor of the nation, almost a religious figure, who is the confidante for lesbian and straight women alike. This would not be too bad if one could look uncritically past the following paragraphs that denunciate the negative behavior of old friends towards Lilly. Fischer has the impression that she is stuck in the middle: “I have to defend Lilly when the opinions are too harsh but I’m also part of the story. Psychologically, I can understand Lilly’s very German silence about the different parts of her past but I can’t really forgive her” (13).<sup>17</sup> She reflects on the issue of individual guilt. Lilly’s guilt as the German who failed to protect her Jewish lover; the guilt of those who uncritically view her Nazi followership as normal; the guilt of those who cannot see that Lilly combines

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<sup>14</sup> “jungen Menschen ermöglichen, sich anhand eines so eindringlichen Einzelschicksals mit der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus auseinanderzusetzen”.

<sup>15</sup> “Ende ihrer Isolation”.

<sup>16</sup> “verheiratete Frauen, die das Bedürfnis haben, ihr über ihre geheime Liebe zu einer Frau zu erzählen”.

<sup>17</sup> “muß ich Lilly verteidigen, wo das Urteil allzu harsch ausfällt, bin ich aber auch Beteiligte an der Geschichte. Ich kann zwar Lilly’s allzu deutsches Schweigen über die abgespaltenen Teile ihrer Vergangenheit psychologisch verstehen, nicht aber wirklich verzeihen”.

differences which may be irreconcilable, as a German perpetrator and a lesbian victim. It's valid to question at this point how far Fischer herself is guilty of these same errors, given that Lilly was the one who survived where Felice died, making her unable to tell her own story. Fischer admits that "the Jewish survivors and Felice's friends cannot and do not want to make peace with Lilly Wust" (13) and what sounds rather factual negates the feelings and emotions still at work in these people.<sup>18</sup>

Elenai Predski-Kramer is one of the friends who talked with Fischer for the second edition of her book. Kramer recalls her feelings upon having seen the book in passing the first time and why she can't reconcile with Lilly Wust:

The crazy hope: 'Is my friend Felice still alive; did someone find her and write about her?' The hope was false but the pain grew because by then Elenai Predski-Kramer couldn't rule out anymore that Lilly Wust sold out Felice Schragenheim to the Gestapo. An upsetting suspicion that is fed by the lively memories of the witness which don't seem to be congruent with the sentimental and sad lesbian story of the German Hitler follower Wust (Aimée) and the persecuted Jew Schragenheim (Jaguar). A story in which the war allegedly destroyed the big love, in which one woman unfortunately dies somehow and the other is broken and lost in sorrow forever.<sup>19</sup> (Sperber)

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<sup>18</sup> "die jüdischen Überlebenden und Felices Freundinnen können und wollen keinen Frieden schließen mit Lilly Wust".

<sup>19</sup> "die verrückte Hoffnung: Lebt meine Freundin Felice noch; hat jemand sie gefunden und über sie geschrieben?" Die Hoffnung trog, der Schmerz aber wuchs, weil Elenai Predski-Kramer inzwischen nicht mehr ausschließen mag, dass Felice Schragenheim von Lilly Wust an die Gestapo verraten wurde. Ein schlimmer Verdacht, der sich speist aus den eigenen lebhaften Erinnerungen der Zeitzeugin, die so gar nicht in Deckung zu bringen sind mit der rührselig-traurigen Lesben-Geschichte von der deutschen Hitler-Sympathisantin Wust (Aimée) und der verfolgten Jüdin Schragenheim (Jaguar), die das Buch erzählt. In der angeblich die widrigen Umstände des Krieges eine große Liebe zerstört hätten, in der die eine Frau leider irgendwie ums Leben kommt und die andere für immer gebrochen in Trauer versinkt".

The reader is inevitably left to wonder what is fact and fiction, if there is one ‘truth’ or maybe no ‘truth’ at all because witnesses contradict each other and scratching the surface seems a violation of the dead. I will come back to a thorough critique of the book and the lesbian love story after my analysis of the representation of lesbian persecution. In this context the preface’s last sentence is important, however, as it stands in direct opposition to the topic of the novel as well as its atmosphere. Fischer hopes that the preface helps “to read the bittersweet love story of Aimée and Jaguar with all its refractions without losing its timeless beauty and romance” (Fischer, *Aimee & Jaguar. Eine Liebesgeschichte* 14).<sup>20</sup> Before the reader has even read the first sentence, he is primed to suppress instances that may not fit into the rhetoric of the romantic love story and accredit more meaning to those scenes that support it.

From the opening scene of the novel, the role of women under National Socialist rule is described and emphasized. Ilse Wolf has to complete a yearlong internship to “arouse joy at one’s domestic and social vocation” (Fischer, *Aimee and Jaguar: A Love Story* 3), and to prepare for the children every woman was expected to raise. Lilly Wust remembers: “I turned into a good little housewife and had children. Basically, I was brought up to have a family and run a household, and that’s what I did” (4). With four children, she says, she would have expected her husband to help out with some of the housework but the clear division of male and female roles emphasized in chapter one made such an arrangement impossible. “He had no idea what to do with small children,” reiterates how little men were taught about childcare, and Lilly states matter-of-factly

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<sup>20</sup> “die bittersüße Liebesgeschichte von Aimée und Jaguar mit all ihren Brechungen zu lesen, ohne daß dabei ihre zeitlose Schönheit und Romantik verlorengehen”.

“there were thousands of households like ours, households that had no interest in anything but their offspring. We women swapped recipes, that was more important to us than anything else” (4). Her account of family life conveys a sense of normalcy, which similarly points to her sheltered life as a German woman adapted to living under the rule of the NSDAP. It is curious to notice that this peaceful existence Lilly seems to lead does not end the moment she learns of Felice’s Jewishness but cracks open only after Felice has been deported. Her diary, her ‘Tränenbüchlein’ (‘little book of tears’), is her record of what happens after Felice is gone. It remains one of the two confirmations that losing Felice set something in motion in Lilly, which the war or even the awareness that she may be a lesbian and in love with a Jewish woman did not previously touch. Are those consequences and remnants of persecution through the Nazis? Reading Lilly’s diary one comes across an entry written after she has been summoned to the Gestapo for having visited Theresienstadt. While “everyone [is] in a state of upset except Lilly,” she notes “I don’t know how it is that at the moment of greatest danger I can keep my wits about me. [...] It is not only Felice who has nerves of steel” (220). As the questioning by the Gestapo turns into hours Fischer narrates

‘You knew Schragenheim was a Jew. You did know. Talk!’ they shouted at her. Lilly hadn’t known, she said. Lilly was astounded to discover that, rather than being afraid, she was totally alert. She needed to remain vigilant to perceive the traps they were setting for her; she could not afford to be inattentive. One careless answer and she, and Felice and their friends, would be done forever. (223)

Lilly’s persecution, I would argue, rather than being about herself or her perceived sexual orientation is aimed at gaining information about Jews still hiding out in Berlin. As a mother of four, still married to a German soldier and with obvious connections to Jews in hiding, Lilly was more valuable for the Gestapo as a source of information about other

Jews they could capture rather than one possibly lesbian woman. Having demonstrated that she was 'usable' as a mother and housewife her duties to the Führer could be maintained in the future as well. Additionally, according to Fischer, the Gestapo protocol states that "there was no lesbian love between us" as Lilly's answer to the question if they had a sexual relationship (223).

The sexuality of Lilly Wust is a topic from the start. Inge becomes an accomplice to the "visits from [the] gentlemen friends" although she "neither understood nor wished to understand her employer's political or sexual preferences" (6). Though Lilly is married, she has affairs with friends of her husband as that there is no love or passion between them anymore. In fact, both Lilly and her husband have extra-marital affairs, however, there are no love affairs with women either before or after Felice. On the contrary, Lilly gets married again after the war in 1950 (cf. *Aimee and Jaguar* 263). Curiously, in regards to men Lilly describes her physical arousal as nonexistent, which goes along with Nazi expectation that women do not need to feel pleasure to have children. Although she says she "enjoyed having my children" she instantly comes around to "But the way they were made, *that's* another story" (8). With Felice, Lilly feels changed:

men took their pleasure with me and I felt used. With Felice it was just totally different. She was my counterpart, my complement, literally. I felt I was both myself and Felice. We were a mirror image. She needed only to touch me and I... When she kissed me I surrendered to her completely. Sex was pleasing for me for the first time in my life. [...] With men I was always the inferior one. The men did it *to* me. *A woman has to wait*, that's how I was raised. With Felice, I myself could be the one who loved. (34)

While this sounds quite positive, Lilly's initial reaction of being with Felice is one of uncertainty, carefully feeling her way along the familiar and yet unfamiliar body. After

the first night of being at the receiving end of Felice's touch it is Lilly who decisively – after a little power struggle – takes the lead to practice what she learned the night before (cf. 33). After a few more times it is for Lilly as if “she had always been ‘this way’” (34).

The first time the theme of persecution comes up, it is directed at Jewish people, not lesbians. Erwin Buchweiser, one of Lilly's lovers and Albrecht's biological father, tries to justify his NSDAP party membership with ignorance: “I joined the party in 1931 because I liked its platform. And there was nothing in the platform about those things. [...] That Jews were taken to concentration camps and killed there” and he adds, “I never did any Jew harm, not even verbally, but everyone says that. Today I sometimes ask myself: Why did we take so little notice? But do you think any of us little people took it seriously?” (10). In his statement Erwin Buchweiser outlines not only his own thoughts, but those of Günther and many others of the ‘little people’ he talks about. Lilly Wust's claim that she can smell Jews, the pivotal point in the book and the initial reason Felice and Lilly meet at all, is anchored in reasoning like this. Fischer's ability to weave historical facts and documents into the narrative also brings up many of the important dates in the persecution of Jews by the National Socialists. Especially in the part about Felice's life and upbringing, where Jewishness plays a major role after Nazi politics make clear that their lives are in danger, limitations and changes imposed on Jews are recounted. From switching schools to being restricted more and more in their daily life Erica Fischer uses the space of Felice's biography to bring in the beginning stages of persecution against Jews. In fact, while Felice's and Lilly's characters are meant to be read together as lesbians persecuted based on their sexual orientation and relationship

status, it is in the context of Felice appearing in the story that the topic of persecution – of any kind – is brought up.

Lesbian persecution is not evident in the novel *Aimee & Jaguar* unless one understands it as the persecution of a Jewish person who also happens to be in a lesbian relationship. This would be the same interpretation given earlier with the example of Hilde Radusch who was the communist lesbian persecuted for her political ideation. Constructing their relationship in this way, however, leads to the question if Felice and Lilly were in a lesbian relationship at all or if they were using each other for their own purposes. Felice's friend and fellow Jew Elenai Predski-Kramer was and is convinced that it was Lilly who had her own agenda, others who are not mentioned explicitly think likewise. In analyzing the book, more questions come up than are being answered. Told by the sole survivor of the relationship with no one who has evidence to prove her otherwise, Lilly claims this love story between a German woman and a Jewish woman existed. A romantic, eternal, and true love that would have – or so she and the reader can imagine – endured the War and the future. A happy ending and finally something good that even the Nazis could not destroy and which blossomed even in spite of their persecution. A problem remains in the incongruences between what is 'authentic' memory and what Lilly has tried to bury in her memory of the past. Fischer records in the epilogue her frustration with the holes in Lilly's story and her manner of brushing over what does not fit in. She says "Lilly presents herself as a dull housewife who was so busy changing diapers that she didn't have time to keep up with what was going on in the world" (270) as if that would excuse her blue-eyed ignorance about what could happen to Felice if she got caught. "But this view of herself contradicts her recollections of her



family”, Fischer goes on, “her Communist father, her mother’s Jewish lover, and her brother, who was killed in the Spanish Civil War. She could not have been as apolitical as she presents herself” (270). Instead, there are the holes in her biography she skips over, a

murky patina of obscurity covers a period of ten years of her life. Have they been suppressed, forgotten or consciously petrified, as so many of her compatriots have done? Lilly always stressed her family’s acquaintance with Jewish people – ‘Don’t forget the father of my brother!’ – and yet she didn’t notice what was being done to Jews in Germany from 1933 on? (271)

In taking at face value what Erica Fischer tells the reader, however, one can quickly forget the narrator’s point of view. When we read about Felice’s thoughts we are relying on Fischer’s ability to narrate a story from the memory of Lilly Wust, the documents she has available and the testimony of other witnesses. We rely on her as an impartial listener, witness, narrator. Knowing that Erica Fischer is Jewish and admits in her (German edition) introduction that there was also some righteousness on her part in wanting to tell this story, motives and narrative angles coalesce. Erica Fischer is frank with the reader, acknowledging about a conversation with Lilly: “She expected me to accept her view of herself without question, of course: Lilly at Felice’s side as a victim of Nazism” (271).

In the end, Fischer’s representation of lesbian persecution is not what Lilly may have had in mind, nor is it what lesbians seeing the cover of the book may want it to be. The love story is told on a different level from what was happening to and between Jews and Germans during the Nazi era. The structure of the book with its different parts also clearly marks partitions the events into smaller compartments that seem to be detached from each other. What happened to Felice before she met Lilly, what happens to Lilly after the war ends. The interruption of the narrative with interviews, diaries and

flashbacks creates an illusion of standing still. The imminent danger of persecution – of both Jews or lesbians or anyone who is against the Nazis – is only conveyed in small intervals when survivors can tell their story in a few sentences. The overall ‘love story’ and dynamic of the relationship between Lilly and Felice, however, remains static. Up until the acknowledgement that Felice is really dead there are letters, packages, cards; correspondence from concentration camps to the ‘real world’ with content that seems trivial and isn’t given context. Besides the historically established facts of Jewish persecution, e.g. the enactment of Nuremberg Laws, transports in cattle cars, Gestapo punishments, that Fischer intersperses by way of interviews, there is no connection between any act of persecution against Lilly and Felice as a couple. Even Lilly’s trip to Theresienstadt and her consequent interrogation at the Gestapo station are depicted as if danger, degradation and discrimination, were nonexistent. Lilly, though lesbian, is German and not persecuted throughout the story, whereas Felice is subjected to persecution constantly. When both are together, the love story shifts into the foreground, masking persecution of any kind.

### **3.3 Days of Masquerade**

The ten biographical sketches Claudia Schoppmann collected in *Days of Masquerade* show the influence of the Nazis on a whole lesbian subculture and lesbian movement from the mid-1920s until well into the 1970s. As one from the older generation of lesbians portrayed in the book, Jewish artist Gertrude Sandmann survived the Nazis in hiding with the help of German friends. Born in 1893, she is able to

experience the ‘roaring twenties’ and witnesses the slow blossoming of a new lesbian movement in the 1970s. She says “the clubs, this subculture that is spurned today, [were] our first attempt, the first and only and very much welcomed opportunity to get together with likeminded women – a very important beginning”, and adds how important it was for the process of finding her identity as a lesbian: “It was a huge relieving experience to see that so many other women were just like oneself. One came to the club like one ‘came home’, that’s where one belonged” (Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* 85). Sandmann’s impressions about the importance of lesbian subculture for lesbian identity formation make the *Gleichschaltung* and closing of homosexual entertainment establishments a vital part of the oppression that was to follow. Anneliese, born in 1916 and dubbed “Johnny” due to her appearance in male attire, is only 15 when she starts exploring the lesbian subculture of Berlin. Of the many places to go before 1933 only few remain after Hitler’s coming into power. “After the Nazis came to power they were all ‘a bit afraid’ of criminalization, roundups or suspensions. [...] A feeling of imminent threat, of helplessness starts to spread. Some of Johnny’s friends even change their appearance or marry in order to be less visible and vulnerable” (46).

Hiding, whether in plain sight under the guise of heterosexuality, or literally, when other mitigating circumstances are present, is the red thread woven throughout the biographies in the collection. For lesbians the separation into male and female organizations that the Nazis practice makes it easier to find likeminded ‘friends.’ Nevertheless, societal pressure and national socialist upbringing make it hard to find the courage to go into bars. The fear of being seen and reported to family or – even worse – the police is always present. Thus one account cannot only be interpreted as a standalone

incident but must be perceived as an event, which, in different permutations, was feared by those who frequented gay and lesbian bars and clubs. Margarete Knittel recounts:

It was hard to persuade my girlfriend to come to the 'Zauberflöte' with me just once because she was afraid her sister or mother would get wind of it. Sure enough, we ran into two other house occupants of Else's who were just as shocked to see a familiar face. I said to Else 'They are just as afraid as you are, they don't want this to become public anymore than you do', and I went over to them. One of the women was getting a divorce and feared to be found guilty in the divorce if her husband would know the real reason for it. Of course they didn't have to be afraid of us.<sup>21</sup>  
(Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* 88)

Psychological pressure – fear above all – may not have been seen as actual persecution under Nazism but is part of the UN understanding of persecution now. It is also one of main mechanisms the Nazis employed that were directed at lesbian women. In the previous quote it became apparent how much of lesbian life was lived and experienced outside the home. As women, staying true to their Führer-appointed roles as wives and mothers inside the home was expected. Lesbian women therefore stood in direct opposition of what their prescribed life should have been. All of the women, for example, are portrayed as working regular or at least odd jobs, earning money and showing independence from men. Otherness, attracting attention, is being avoided for fear of being found out and questioned. Lesbianism, while not officially an offense, presents still enough of a stigma to make it essential that it be kept a secret unless family members and friends are supportive. Elisabeth Zimmermann only adds: “One didn't talk about it. One tried to protect oneself instinctively. You shut yourself out and acted accordingly: careful” (114).

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<sup>21</sup> A bar for lesbians run by Kati Reinhard and located in the Kommandantenstraße at the Spittelmarkt.

The exception to this rule is Claire Waldoff, born 1884 in Gelsenkirchen as Clara Wortmann. With hits such as *Hermann heeßt er* and *Rrrraus mit den Männern aus'm Reichstag* she is already a national cabaret star by 1933 and although the Nazis would have liked to issue an occupational ban due to her song lyrics – and most likely also her open liaison with Olga ‘Olly’ von Roeder – Claire Waldoff can perform unchallenged. Her only complaint in an interview in 1946 with the *Südost-Kurier* is that Nazis repeatedly tried to violently break apart the crowd that had gathered to hear her sing (cf. 73). There are differences, though, between her and other artists/performers who chose to leave Germany, like Claire’s friend Marlene Dietrich or writer Thomas Mann. Claire is not too critical of the Nazis and therefore not an enemy of the Reich per se. While her lyrics may provoke resentments in some, her personal life can be overlooked by most. Annette Eick, another woman from the collection, is not as fortunate in avoiding persecution by the Nazis precisely because of her religious affiliation. Schoppmann explains:

The carefree times were over soon after Hitler came to power. The reason for the escalating threat and persecution in the following years was her Jewish heritage but not her lesbian identity. Contrary to the religious affiliation registered with the civil registry office it was easier to hide ones lesbian identity than Jewishness. (103)

The other women in the collection talk about Jewish friends, and they can share stories about girlfriends who need to go into hiding or are deported by the Nazis. For those who are not doubly stigmatized as ‘Jewish *and* ...’: Jewish *and* lesbian or communist, socialist, anti-Nazi or catholic, life is about pretending to fit in while trying to go through the process of finding their lesbian identity. Elisabeth Zimmermann, born 1913, says it took her a long time to come out because

the orientation, whether for a man or a woman, remained deep under the surface for a long time. It wasn't only the parental education that kept me from experiencing it but long years passed [...] which wasn't a rarity during the 'Third Reich' with its repressive sexual morals that ostracized women's relationships. (117)

That discovery would mean more than just interrogations by the police or repressions and surveillance through the Gestapo becomes clear in one of Zimmerman's almost haphazardly added subordinate clause, reiterating the fear of consequences in case of detection: "so long as you don't let your sexual tendency slip, otherwise you'd have landed yourself in once of the camps" (120).

Curiously enough – or maybe only a natural consequence of the Weimar Republic and traditional German upbringing – most of the protagonists in the compilation talk about the alienation they feel towards their parents once their sexual orientation has become common knowledge. The possibility of being rejected by the family and expelled from the home they knew is a real fear for the 20 – 30 year old women in the biographical sketches. The repercussions of such actions like homelessness, financial troubles or a loss in social status seem to weigh harder, though, than detection by the Nazis. The psychological damage that was noted earlier can thus likewise be seen as consequence as well as causation for persecution based on lesbian sexual orientation. Connecting the examples in this chapter is the inconspicuousness lesbians had to exhibit to navigate their life and escape persecution. Walking carefully on the narrow line separating accepted and unaccepted actions was elemental.

## Chapter 4 – Lesbian Persecution in Fictional Representations

In this chapter I will analyze fictional texts in regards to the lesbian persecution observable within. I will start out with Claudia Schoppmann's book *Verbotene Verhältnisse* and move on to the 1998 movie *Aimée & Jaguar*, which is based on the biographical novel I examined previously. This chapter is thus a step further away from the 'historical' or non-fictional character of chapter three. It seems important to pause here for a moment and clarify the genre expectations created by using the terms 'historical' and 'fictional.' I am not referring to the opposition real/unreal or truth/lies when using these terms. Instead, in talking about historical representations I employ Thomas Couser's definition of life-writing genres whose "forms may be highly variable, but they are united in being concerned with the identities of actual people" (Couser). Although the movie *Aimée & Jaguar* is based on Erica Fischer's text, director Max Färberböck created a cinematographic piece of fiction that does not make the claim of being biographical in nature.<sup>1</sup> The last movie discussed here, *Novembermond*, moves the chapter even further towards the realm of the fictional as it is not grounded in any historical or hybrid context.

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<sup>1</sup> Neither the front nor the back covers of the DVD mention that the movie is based on a true story or that it is based on Erica Fischer's book by the same title. It is only almost two minutes into the movie as part of the credits that her book is referenced. Those unfamiliar with the content of the book, however, will also not know that it is not purely fictional.

## 4.1 Verbotene Verhältnisse

Claudia Schoppmann's *Verbotene Verhältnisse*,<sup>2</sup> about fictional representations of lesbian persecution, can be analyzed based on the fictional elements of the texts as well as the quotations from the court proceedings. The text is thus neither purely historical nor completely fictional but a sort of hybrid text. As Schoppmann herself notes in her preface: "I tried to show the most probable version of the events without misappropriating any discrepancies; [...]. Nevertheless, all stories will only be approximations of reality, which is subjective and is experienced differently"<sup>3</sup>. The court proceedings she used to piece together the narratives of ten lesbian relationships are furthermore doubly subjective since the prosecution, whose goal was conviction, compiled them. Their agenda was driven by the legal situation created through §129Ib and the ability to instigate investigations into claims of lesbian relationships. Those things that made it into the files, a memory recounted, a letter that was included (or excluded) depending on the helpfulness for the trial, need to be carefully analyzed not so much in terms of accuracy but as *one* version of an event. Each event tells the reader only what was relevant for the persecution of the women's crime but does not give a more comprehensive picture of each woman involved.

There are numerous elements that all ten reconstructed stories have in common, which are part of the context of discrimination and persecution against lesbian women in

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<sup>2</sup> English: Forbidden Relationships.

<sup>3</sup> "So habe ich die mir am wahrscheinlichsten erscheinende Version der Geschehnisse dargestellt, ohne Widersprüchliches zu unterschlagen; [...]. Doch können die Fallgeschichten letztendlich nur eine Annäherung an das sein, was sich in Wirklichkeit, die ja stets subjektiv unterschiedliche erlebt wird, zugetragen haben mag".



Austria during the time of the Third Reich. The first element I will look at is who reported the women and what reasoning can be elicited for going to the police. In three instances it was a close family member who reported the lesbian activity of their daughter, wife or niece. Three reports mention colleagues and the landlord, in one instance it turns out to be the lover herself, one case is built on letters intercepted by the Gestapo and in one example it is not clear who got the ball rolling. With the exception of the intercepted letter(s), what becomes clear while reading the accounts is the motive that can be attributed to the person filing the police report. Three distinct emotions play a role in nine of the ten tales: Revenge for a perceived injustice, fear of being accused of a more severe crime themselves, and malice.

Examples for revenge can be found in “A tipsy story” in which the landlord Bachmann reports his female tenant Elisabeth G. of having lesbian relationships.<sup>4</sup> The precursor to this event, however, is the theft of linens by Elisabeth G. from Bachmann’s mother two months previously. In “Just vengeance?” Berta H. has her husband arrested for threatening to kill her.<sup>5</sup> The husband, Franz H., supposedly as an act of revenge or maybe even malice, then tells the police what he thinks his wife has been doing with other women. Likewise, the actions of father Johann W. can be viewed as acts of revenge as well as malice. Johann W. files a report with the police about his daughter Margarete W. and her lesbian relationship after she has moved out of her parents’ home in defiance of her parents’ rules. Ironically, his daughter had accused him of sexual abuse four years earlier and his actions seem to be motivated “by anger that his daughter does

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<sup>4</sup> “Eine beschwipste Geschichte”.

<sup>5</sup> “Nur ein Racheakt”.

not want to talk to him anymore and has also moved out” (Schoppmann, *Verbotene Verhältnisse* 32).<sup>6</sup> In the case of the aunt and the niece, the perverted lesbian behavior is mentioned in relation with the actual crime committed: theft of clothing and food stamps. The aunt “furiously enters the police station Berlin-Steglitz. She is determined to press charges against Edith T.: her niece. [...] The niece is not unknown to the police, she has been convicted for theft and fraud three times previously” (Schoppmann, *Verbotene Verhältnisse* 105).<sup>7</sup> In this case, although the initial investigation starts in Berlin, Edith T. is later charged in Vienna where she had been arrested on other charges.

Malicious intent can be attributed to Johanna W. in “A morally flawed person”,<sup>8</sup> female colleague of Karoline M., who incriminates her of “groping my chest and especially my breasts with both hands” (Schoppmann, *Verbotene Verhältnisse* 72).<sup>9</sup> Other colleagues chime in, stating that they had seen Karoline M. “making a move on her female colleagues” (72) on other occasions and that she had sexually harassed them (cf. 73).<sup>10</sup> Additionally, it is claimed that she admitted to having an “abnormal disposition” towards women, making it essentially a confession of her lesbian nature.<sup>11</sup> What does not figure into the equation is the fact that Karoline M. had been married for ten years and had two children living with her at the time the accusations were made against her. In

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<sup>6</sup> “wohl aus Ärger darüber, daß seine Tochter nicht mehr mit ihm reden will und überdies ausgezogen ist”.

<sup>7</sup> “betritt [...] erbost das Kriminalkommissariat Berlin-Steglitz. Sie ist fest entschlossen, Anzeige zu erstatten: gegen Edith T., ihre Nichte. [...] Die Nichte, dreimal wegen Diebstahl und Betrug vorbestraft, war kein unbeschriebenes Blatt mehr”

<sup>8</sup> “Eine sittlich nicht einwandfreie Person”.

<sup>9</sup> “mit ihren beiden Händen an meinem Oberkörper und insbesondere meinen Brüsten abgriff”.

<sup>10</sup> “sich an ihre Mitarbeiterinnen heranmacht”.

<sup>11</sup> “abnormal veranlagt”.

fact, while her colleagues claim to have been sexually harassed by her, they also complain she constantly talked about “sexual intercourse with her boyfriend who is currently in the military [and] did not spare us the bawdy details” (73).<sup>12</sup> Only after having heard rumors about a previous involvement with a young woman – a prostitute who admitted to having seduced Karoline M.! – did the colleagues interpret Karoline M.’s behavior as sexually harassing. Despite these incongruences, however, Karoline M. was found guilty under §129Ib for being a threat to the morals of the younger workers. Based on the information provided by Schoppmann it seems more likely that there wasn’t any lesbian behavior on Karoline M.’s part, but that the underlying reason for her persecution was to remove her from the factory. Schoppmann concludes: “It is quite possible that the real reason for her dismissal and subsequent charges was a disruption of working morale. In addition, the management appeared to have been dissatisfied with her performance” (75).<sup>13</sup>

The involvement of unrelated other charges in the cases prosecuted with §129Ib are worth noting for several reasons. Except for “Lady seeks Lady as friend” the stories reflect that the initial charges had little or nothing to do with lesbian behavior.<sup>14</sup> It appears, instead, that accusing women of unnatural acts of sodomy with other women served to discredit them and get justice when the original crime was not prosecuted, or it would be easier to prosecute on the basis of §129Ib. In all nine cases where such a

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<sup>12</sup> “über den Geschlechtsverkehr mit ihrem derzeitig eingerückten Freund geäußert und dabei mit schlüpfrigen Details nicht gespart”.

<sup>13</sup> “Vermutlich lag in der Störung der Arbeitsmoral der eigentliche Grund für Karoline M.s Entlassung und ihrer vergleichsweise harte Strafe. Außerdem schien die Betriebsleitung mit ihren Leistungen unzufrieden zu sein”.

<sup>14</sup> “Dame sucht Dame als Freundin”.

strategy seems to be employed, the underlying rationale that becomes obvious is moral superiority. The perpetrators involve the police because they see it as their moral obligation to do so. In this context sins of theft, fraud, or mythomania are reduced to insignificance for the benefit of that which threatens the very fabric of a moral society.<sup>15</sup> While Austria was not officially subjected to the National Socialist ideals prior to its annexation in 1938, it had carved out its own traditions and values amidst revolutionary upheavals after World War I and with multiple nationalities composing the new Republic of Austria.<sup>16</sup> Politically, until the annexation, Christian Socialist chancellors governed Austria and propagated values infused by Catholicism. Like §175 in Germany, §129Ib had existed in Austrian history long before the National Socialists came to power. The Nazis did not change it and thus its function must be separated from the goal of the Nazis to exterminate homosexuality. An examination of the rate of convictions for Vienna based on §129Ia+b reveals that there was only a marginal increase for men and women between 1938 and 1945. Fluctuations before 1938 range from 104 to 224 convictions and between 1938-1945 from 145 to 258 in Vienna. Of these, women accounted for no more than 20 convictions in 1943 and otherwise ranged between 8-12 per year (cf. 140). The court decisions offered in the stories document a different objective from those of the National Socialists, one that is geared towards upholding traditional morals in society.

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<sup>15</sup> Mythomania is a term used in psychiatry to describe habitual or compulsive lying.

<sup>16</sup> For a very comprehensive overview of the cultural and political movements and their influence on Austria before 1938 I recommend John W. Boyer's *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918* and *Nazism and the Radical Right in Austria, 1918-1934* by John T. Lauridsen.

Sodomy became any act “which serves to infringe on the general sense of shame and morale in sexual regards” (75).<sup>17</sup>

Persecution of women accused of having had sexual contact with another woman presents itself in two forms.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand there are the people accusing these women, and on the other hand there is the official persecution through the police and the court system. Oftentimes the assumption was made by the latter that a victim/perpetrator – or seduced/seducer – dynamic was at play, as will become clear when analyzing the final sentencing in each case. Before analyzing the court verdicts, however, it is necessary to parse out two things: What counted as lesbian behavior in the first place? And how did lesbian behavior transgress the morals of society? The stories present a variety of acts that were classified as lesbian behavior, though with few exceptions the women stated in their confessions that they did not identify as lesbians. It is vital to point out in this context that the information Schoppmann used to write the stories came from court documents and interrogations. One is caught in a double bind between what was explicitly and enthusiastically being recorded by the police, and the emotional predicament of the women being interrogated. Schoppmann notes that such an interrogation will have been experienced as threatening and intimidating by most of the women, evident prominently in confessions that were made and later recanted as well as

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<sup>17</sup> “das allgemeine Scham- und Sittlichkeitsgefühl in geschlechtlicher Hinsicht zu verletzen”.

<sup>18</sup> I hesitate to call the relationships presented by Claudia Schoppmann ‘lesbian’ relationships or to ascribe the term ‘lesbians’ to the women involved except when they themselves state that they are lesbians. To do otherwise would mean reducing a complex, loving relationship between two people to a mere sexual act in which both parties happen to be female. The impact of this on the representation of lesbian persecution during the Holocaust will be discussed at a later point.

court statements about having been pressured by the police to say what they wanted to hear (cf. 14). Thus Elisabeth G. withdraws her confession with the statement that a police officer “cajoled me to confess by claiming that M. and I would then probably be released” (21),<sup>19</sup> Marie K. admits she confessed, “because I wanted to be left in peace and not be incarcerated” (84),<sup>20</sup> and finally there is the curious rationale of Elisabeth L. who admits to being bisexual “since the court suggested in its sentence that an admission of lesbian predisposition may potentially constitute exonerating circumstances” (89).<sup>21</sup> Regarding the influence of the Nazis after 1938, one woman reports, “the confession ‘of having had a love affair’ was coerced by the Gestapo officer” (98).<sup>22</sup> These four examples should amply illustrate the problem one experiences in trying to analyze the representation of persecution based on documents compiled by the legal apparatus that is the oppressor.

Acts of lesbian behavior range from letter writing to kissing and touching of breasts and genitals or rubbing bodies against each other. I would argue, however, that the exact nature of the act was not important but that instead the reasoning of the police, based on two suppositions, determined whether women were persecuted. The first superstition is evident in statements such as the one given in the report on the two pen pals. Although it was obvious from the letter that sender and recipient didn’t know each other personally “the Gestapo Linz concluded that ‘both women had a same-sex affair’

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<sup>19</sup> “mir zuredete, ich solle ein Geständnis ablegen, dann könnten ich und die M. bestimmt freigehen”.

<sup>20</sup> “weil ich Ruhe haben und mich nicht einsperren lassen wollte”.

<sup>21</sup> “daß das Eingeständnis einer lesbischen Veranlagung sich möglicherweise entlastend ausgewirkt hätte”.

<sup>22</sup> “Zu dem Geständnis, ‘ein Liebesverhältnis unterhalten zu haben’, habe sie der Gestapobeamte gezwungen”.

and that ‘the issue is unacceptable not only because it is criminal under Austrian law but more so because L. is an educator’ (80).<sup>23</sup> The underlying concern expressed here is that of moral decay and seduction of the youth (age 18) by Elisabeth L. (age 28) since no actual illegal act is committed by expressing sexual thoughts and fantasies on paper. It is the mere idea of a lesbian woman influencing and seducing the people in her surroundings, which is the problem. The court’s conviction of Karoline M. (age 35) as a person “posing a threat to the younger factory workers in moral regards” (75) underscores the notion that lesbianism was a moral problem, which needed to be eradicated.<sup>24</sup> The second assumption playing into the persecution of ‘lesbian’ women is intricately linked with the voyeurism of the police and a view of female sexuality congruent with that of the Nazis. It is the belief that female sexuality can only occur for procreation but not for pleasure. In all of the stories recounted by Schoppmann the accused women are asked about and answer questions pertaining to the sexual satisfaction that their behavior gave them. Aloisia E. and Sophie P., for example, are sentenced by the court with the statement that “both women intended and planned an act of sodomy, meaning the abuse of the body of another person of the same sex for sexual gratification” (121).<sup>25</sup> Margarethe T. vehemently denies having kissed and hugged another woman “for sexual gratification” (98),<sup>26</sup> whereas the confession of Franziska P.

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<sup>23</sup> “kam die Gestapo Linz zu dem Schluß, daß die beiden Frauen ein gleichgeschlechtliches Verhältnis’ pflegten und daß es sich bei der L. um eine Jugenderzieherin handelte und diese Sache allein aus diesem Grunde neben der Strafbarkeit nach dem österr. St.G.B. untragbar ist”.

<sup>24</sup> “in sittlicher Hinsicht für die jüngeren Arbeiterinnen eine Gefahr bedeutete”.

<sup>25</sup> “von den beiden angeklagten Frauen eine Unzuchtshandlung gewollt und beabsichtigt war, also ein der Sinnlust dienender Mißbrauch des Körpers einer anderen Person desselben Geschlechts”.

<sup>26</sup> “zur geschlechtlichen Befriedigung”.

and Margarete W. reads: “P. used her hand to play with the genitals of W. until she reached sexual climax” (34).<sup>27</sup> It can therefore be said that the persecution of lesbian women was grounded in the understanding that female sexuality excluded pleasure and sexual fulfillment for women and that, conversely, acting out sexually with another woman violated the perception of women as nonsexual. If a woman cannot experience pleasure with men but desires another woman for sexual satisfaction she emasculates the male and reduces him to the role of sperm donor – a reversal of roles from identifying women as the bearer of children and a sign of independence from men. It is not surprising that in order to exonerate themselves from the allegation of lesbianism most women cite children, husbands or boyfriends as proof that they have ‘normal intercourse.’ One judge rationalizes his rather mild sentencing decision with the fact that the women were in a state of sexual destitution due to their husbands fighting in the war (cf. 34).

As far as the sentencing is concerned, four components seem to have determined the gravity of the punishment. First, the confessions that were given; second, with what intentions the crimes were being committed; third, whether they were a one-time occurrence or repetitive acts; and fourth, whether mitigating circumstances were present like children, husbands, or the element of seduction. In all cases the court did not impose the maximum punishment of up to five years in prison against the women. A maximum of six months in prison were given to Leopoldine B. on grounds of “repeat offenses with different women, a continuation over a longer period of time, lack of judgment, and the

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<sup>27</sup> “daß die P. mit ihrer Hand solange am Geschlechtsteil der W. spielte, bis bei dieser Befriedigung eintrat”.



fact that she was the driving force” (54)<sup>28</sup> and Thomas N. for having a long criminal record and, most likely, also because he was Czech.<sup>29</sup> Otherwise the sentences usually ranged between three to four months in prison. Twice sentences were suspended and changed to three years on probation instead. In the case of Franziska P. and Margarete W., where it was the father who initiated the arrest and questioning, the judge reasons that “given the remorse of the accused and the minor level of the charge the simple threat of punishment seemed more convenient than its immediate execution” (34).<sup>30</sup> This verdict was given with the condition, however, that the women agree to cease having contact with each other. In the example of the jealous husband in “Only an act of vengeance” Stefanie K. and Berta H. are also released and – unexpectedly – all charges dismissed.<sup>31</sup> Motivation seems to have been the general pardon by Hitler from September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1939, which stated “court cases due to violations of the law that had been committed before September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1939 and in which a prison sentence of less than three months was expected should be suspended” (43).<sup>32</sup> When analyzing both instances closer it becomes obvious very quickly that these rationalizations are merely smokescreens, which hide an issue embedded deep in the culture of National Socialist ideology: Patriarchy. For Margarete W. and Franziska P., the confession of their sexual act, a behavior against the

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<sup>28</sup> “die mehrfache Wiederholung mit verschiedenen Frauenpersonen, die Fortsetzung durch längere Zeit, mangelnde Einsicht und der Umstand, daß sie die treibende Kraft gewesen ist”.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas N. was not sentenced for any same-sex activity but because he took part in the thefts in the story “A momentous theft” (“Ein folgenschwerer Diebstahl”).

<sup>30</sup> “in Berücksichtigung der Reue der Angeklagten und den geringeren Grad des Verschuldens [erschien] die bloße Androhung der Strafe zweckmäßiger als deren sofortige Vollstreckung”.

<sup>31</sup> “Nur ein Racheakt”.

<sup>32</sup> “Strafverfahren wegen Zuwiderhandlungen, die vor dem 14. September 1939 begangen wurden und bei denen eine Gefängnis- beziehungsweise Arreststrafe von nicht mehr als drei Monaten zu erwarten war, eingestellt werden”.

male-centered rules of society, is coupled with an admission of remorse: “Why I got these ideas I don’t know, maybe because I read romance novels. We did feel ashamed afterwards” (34).<sup>33</sup> Although confessions were made in some of the other stories, too, this one is the only one that has the two women attempt an explanation of their behavior. The use of the word ‘ashamed’ can be read as shame for having committed an illegal act, shame for feeling (illegal) physical pleasure or shame for having feelings that society deemed unnatural. In conjunction with the fact that the court demands they never see each other again and that a threat of punishment would work better than direct punishment, a patriarchal power structure is assumed. I would argue that by dropping all charges but keeping a threat in place, patriarchic control is evoked and sanctioned to observe the women. In this way psychological persecution is created that not only forbids Margarete W. and Franziska P. to meet but also influences any other contacts they may be trying to meet lest they be accused of sodomy again. Such psychological measures similarly extended to the second story, in which it is Stefanie K.’s admission to being ‘different’ that may well have been the deciding factor:

I may have an abnormal disposition and I am more attracted to women although I have never touched a woman before. I have known of my disposition since my youth. I have had dealings with a man once but it disgusted me. I have always liked women and would’ve liked to kiss them but I wouldn’t have known what else to do.<sup>34</sup> (42)

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<sup>33</sup> “Wieso ich überhaupt auf solche Ideen kam, weiß ich nicht, vielleicht durch das Lesen von Romanen. Wir haben uns darnach schon geschämt”.

<sup>34</sup> “Ich bin wohl abnormal veranlagt und fühle mich zu Frauen hingezogen, doch habe ich noch nie eine Frau angerührt. Ich weiß von meiner Veranlagung schon seit meiner Jugend. Ich habe einmal mit einem Manne zu tun gehabt, doch empfand ich Abscheu. Ich habe Frauen immer gerne gehabt und hätte sie küssen wollen, hätte aber nicht gewußt, was ich sonst zu tun gehabt hätte”.

Did the judge possibly see this confession as a chance to find more lesbians if he let Stefanie K. go and have her followed instead? Could the justification be similar to the one used previously, that the fear of punishment was more effective than conviction and time in prison? Or did it have nothing to do with Stefanie K. and instead everything with Berta H. and her three children, her husband and her pregnancy? Here, we would have a housewife conforming to the heteronormative ideal of the women's role who may have strayed from the straight path but remained inconspicuous otherwise. She is rewarded by a system that places emphasis on motherhood and marriage. Stefanie K. on the other hand is now known in the police records as a self-proclaimed woman with feelings towards other women and could, very possibly, face the same intimidation and threat of future punishment as the women in the previous story.

The last two items that I want to draw attention to regarding the persecution of lesbian women are class and religious affiliation. All of the women described in the stories are from the lower class, mostly female workers conscripted to laboring in strategic factories, prostitutes, thieves, and unemployed housewives. In some cases it is noted that the women appeared in court without a defense attorney because they could not pay him, in others the repetitive nature of a crime or previous convictions are held against them. It begs the questions whether higher social classes were more adept at blending in, more proficient at hiding or better connected to make arrangements like fake marriages with male homosexuals? Or was the lower class targeted because, as I have argued before, §129Ib was a means to enforce moral behavior? As such, the lower social class would have been subjected to enforcement of order and structure with measures directed at behavior in the workplace, where they were visible to the general public. The

virtues of orderliness and structure that German housewives of the middle and upper class were to implement in their homes and families were beyond the grasp of the lower class to achieve while they were trying to make ends meet. §129Ib thus became a method of control, the judge, the jury and the executioner of any antisocial behavior under the guise of relating to sexually explicit acts.

The lack of religious affiliation as mitigating factor in the stories is perhaps the most interesting deviation from the fictional representations analyzed in this section. Although Claudia Schoppmann uses the introduction to exemplify the case of Lilly “Sara” R. and Marie W., a Jewish woman and an Austrian woman denounced in April 1940, there is hardly any material to warrant an analysis. With the exception of an excerpt from the police report, which notes that the two women were accused by neighbors of having had a sexual encounter, we do not find out more than that. Was there a lawsuit? Was Lilly R. deported to a German concentration camp? Did the neighbors report a Jew living with Marie W. or did they perceive two lovers? The complete lack of any presence of Jewishness in the ‘lesbian acts’ brought to court can be perceived as an indication that it was possible to be persecuted solely on the basis of sexual orientation as a lesbian without other crimes as a smokescreen. What speaks against an interpretation like this, however, is the fact that all cases presented by Schoppmann were not romantic lesbian relationships but fell under the category of sexual acts between two women and were thus perceived as morally wrong. In the Nazi view of femininity love and being nurturing were perceived as positive. Part of the reasoning for not instituting a §175 for women was the argument that it would have been too difficult to differentiate between an innocent female hug and an erotic one. A lesbian affair or a sexual act between women as

presented to the court, however, excluded even the idea of love and reduced the incident to a behavior borne from lust. With that, the moral issue of §129Ib came into play again and any involvement of religious affiliation became obsolete.

## **4.2 Aimée & Jaguar:**

*Aimée & Jaguar* is a 1998 movie loosely based on the documentary biography by Erica Fischer discussed in the previous chapter. Focusing exclusively on the short period of time that Lilly and Felice share in Berlin, the film displays their growing feelings for each other alongside the escalating danger that Felice is in as a Jew in Nazi Germany. The two storylines are intertwined in such a way that an analysis of the representation of lesbian persecution is always by necessity connected with the persecution of Jewish people in the Third Reich. There are three independent, yet intertwined, ways of examining *Aimée & Jaguar* in terms of lesbian persecution that also show the dynamics between the main female characters. One is to look at each character individually and analyze where and how they are persecuted as individuals. The drawback, however, is that there are multiple layers of persecution and one needs to sift through all of them in order to find those that are lesbian in nature. Another is to take the love affair between Felice and Lilly as the starting point and examine persecution against them as a couple. In this approach, the dichotomy between being persecuted as a German versus a Jewish lesbian as well as the dependency of one woman on the other is clearer than with the first approach. Lastly, it is also possible to start with the group of lesbians that Felice is part of and go from there. A problem, which may manifest itself in this method, is that most

members also have other reasons for being wanted by the police. Here, lesbian persecution is overshadowed by Jewishness or acts of resistance, with some participants of the group not even being female or Jewish.

I chose to start with Felice and Lilly as this approach also grants me the opportunity to address the problematic issue of the love story first before going into an analysis of the characters. The movie is touted with the subtitle ‘A love greater than death’, exaggerating the book subtitle ‘A love story’ by far.<sup>35</sup> The DVD back cover lays out the summary of who-meets-whom, concluding with the climax: “In the middle of the war begins a passionate love”.<sup>36</sup> The main question everything revolves around at this point is whether what the audience sees on the screen is actually a passionate love story or whether it is not rather an exploitation of feelings in exchange for safety. Scholars are undecided on the matter, with some claiming that the audience “is predisposed to approach the story of Felice and Lilly as a love story, an episode in the past that is of interest not so much for its Nazi context as for its reworking of the ‘eternal’ themes of forbidden love, nonconformity, and tragic loss” (Taberner 232) and others contending that Lilly symbolizes “narcissistic lesbianism” (Parkinson 149) without real feelings for Felice.

I struggle with reading the events in the movie as either an exclusive love story between Felice and Lilly or a merely narcissistic self-staging by Lilly. Rather, I see how doubtful it is that a German mother of four who claims to be able to smell Jews can fall in love with a – Jewish – woman in a matter of weeks. Likewise, I can also see the doubts of

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<sup>35</sup> “Eine Liebe größer als der Tod”.

<sup>36</sup> “Mitten im Bombenkrieg beginnt eine leidenschaftliche Liebe”.

those who accuse Felice of only acting in self-preservation and playing the lover. The problem I perceive in such readings of the movie is the small but important detail that the movie would not work without a love story. If Lilly and Felice are not lovers then the movie is about a German woman who hides a Jewish woman in her apartment during the war, and as such is not something that can be sold as novel to an audience in the 1990s. Yet while it is tempting to construe Lilly and Felice's lesbian behavior as evidence for the persecution of lesbians during the holocaust history, Felice's Jewishness makes it impossible to see past the racial repercussions of the plot.<sup>37</sup> In the context of the movie, the 'love story' between the two women seems to amplify the discrimination against the Jews while obfuscating outright persecution of women on the basis of their sexual identity. There is, in fact, a juxtaposition between the two that marks Felice first and foremost as a Jew and identifies Lilly as the Nazi-housewife-turned-lesbian. Their characters inhabit different spheres that make it difficult to distinguish between the subtly represented acts of discrimination against lesbian women and the more obvious persecution of Jews. The display of the yellow star serves as the identifier for Jews and the constant referral to the absence of this symbol in the circle of women surrounding Felice emphasizes that they are persecuted first and foremost as Jewish women.

A poignant example for this can be found in the behavior of Ilse's father after he overhears Felice and Ilse argue in small basement space where Felice is hiding (Färberböck 36:31). After Felice exclaims "I gave you my friendship, Ilse, and my love

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<sup>37</sup> The best definition that I can argue for is that there is lesbian behavior (sexual acts, kissing, etc.) occurring between Lilly and Felice but not a love story.

and I don't have more than that" (36:29)<sup>38</sup> he opens the door and demands to know "Who is in love with whom" (36:29)?<sup>39</sup> Following this short exchange Ilse narrates the rest of the situation: "My father was actually a communist and a helpful person. Felice asked him politely if he had never heard of Sappho before. That's when he looked like the whole Kremlin together and threw her out".<sup>40</sup> The issue at hand for him is not that Felice is a Jew as he appears to have been hiding her for some time. Ilse's mention of him being a Communist underscores this notion and suggests that he helped Felice precisely because she is persecuted by the Nazis for being Jewish. Once another aspect of her identity is revealed, that of her being a lesbian, the father faces an inner conflict that he can only resolve by throwing her out.

Two things happen here at the same time that are noteworthy for the analysis of representation but also as glimpses into what life may have been like for lesbians. First, the ease with which Felice inserts a joke about lesbianism downplays the danger that she is in and the added complication of having to look for another hiding place. There seem to be no negative repercussions for her, her character is represented as unafraid, carefree, and ingenuous at avoiding Nazi detection by pretending to be one. On the other hand, one sees how in this instance sexual identity overrides Jewishness and compassion for 'the Jew' turns into contempt for 'the lesbian.' This, however, has less to do with a national socialist perception of homosexuals and more with the fact that the father is a communist.

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<sup>38</sup> "Ich hab dir meine Freundschaft gegeben, Ilse, und meine Liebe und mehr hab ich nicht".

<sup>39</sup> "Wer liebt hier wen"?

<sup>40</sup> "Mein Vater war ja eigentlich Kommunist und 'n hilfsbereiter Mensch. Felice fragte ihn ganz höflich, ob er noch nie was von Sappho gehört habe. Da schaute er wie der ganze Kreml auf einmal und setzte sie raus".



In order to understand the actions of the father one needs to look at the conflict-laden relation between communists and national socialists in the 1930s and their stance on homosexuality. Klaus Mann penned a scathing article in 1934 directed at anti-Fascists who used (male) homosexuality for political means to discredit national socialists:

Where does it come from that we read the combination ‘murderer and pedophile’ as often in anti-fascist newspapers as we read ‘betrayal of the Volk and a Jew’ in Nazi newspapers? The word ‘pedophile’ as a swearword: because there seem to be many in the national socialist organizations who love young men rather than women.<sup>41</sup> (Mann)

Communists viewed all Nazis as ‘faggots’ and treated them accordingly before the Nazis rose to power in 1933. Susanne zur Nieden attributes this mainly to Ernst Röhm and the Röhm-Putsch.<sup>42</sup> She explains that “in the early 1930s German social democrats and communists repeatedly picked up on the homosexual orientation of some national socialist leaders [...] in order to discredit the whole national socialist movement” (Nieden 133). She goes on to illustrate the effect, saying that by combining and linking homosexuality to national socialism “quite a depreciating stereotype of the Nazi was constructed and it was suggested to the general public that homosexuality was widely

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<sup>41</sup> “Woher kommt es denn, daß wir in antifaschistischen Zeitungen die Wortzusammenstellungen “Mörder und Päderast” beinahe ebenso häufig lesen wie in den Naziblättern die von “Volksverrättern und Juden”? Das Wort “Päderast” als ein Schimpfwort: nur weil es in nationalsozialistischen Verbänden viele geben soll, die junge Männer lieben statt Frauen”.

<sup>42</sup> Ernst Röhm was a close friend of Adolf Hitler since the 1920s and rose through the military ranks to become Chief of the SA. His homosexuality was an open secret among the Nazi leadership but he was protected from persecution because of his usefulness for Hitler. By 1934, however, Röhm had gained too much power and had become a problem for Hitler. The final nail in the coffin was Röhm’s insistence on strengthening the military power of the SA against Hitler’s orders. He was arrested and shot on Hitler’s orders in June 1934 (cf. Nieden 134ff.).

prevalent in NS organizations” (133).<sup>43</sup> Being a homosexual was the worst thing communists and social democrats could imagine in someone. In this particular scene the communist father faces the contradiction of his political beliefs: saving a Jew while helping a homosexual. As a Jewish person Felice evokes his hatred for the Nazis and thus sympathy for her. And although from a communist perspective all Nazis are seen as homosexuals and hated by the communists why does he attribute more value to her sexual orientation than to her Judaism? How does a Jewish lesbian figure into the equation? I would argue that in this instance the discrepancy lies in the father’s persona as a male and as a father. Although Felice’s homosexuality would not have threatened him in his masculinity it was a threat to his daughter, particularly given the nature of the discovery with Felice telling Ilse she doesn’t have more to give than her love. As was discussed in the analysis of the documentary biography *Aimee & Jaguar*, neither this scene nor anything remotely similar ever happened or was remembered by the interviewed people. In the scope of the movie, however, it is a necessary scene that moves the plot forward. It forces Felice to find another place to stay and Lilly is the obvious choice. Furthermore, for an audience that is expecting a plot about two lesbian lovers under the Nazis such a separation of empathy for Jews on the one hand and incomprehension for homosexuality on the other could be seen as expected. Given that the movie was not marketed as ‘Jewish’ but as ‘lesbian’ the expectations of the audience will – I assume – have been sympathy for homosexual persecution with little attention to

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<sup>43</sup> “In den frühen dreißiger Jahren griffen deutsche Sozialdemokraten und Kommunisten immer wieder die homosexuelle Orientierung einiger nationalsozialistischer Führer auf, vornehmlich die Ernst Röhm, um so die gesamte nationalsozialistische Bewegung zu diskreditieren. Durch die Verkopplung mit Homosexualität wurde von der antifaschistischen Linken ein äußerst abwertendes Nazi-Stereotyp konstruiert und der Öffentlichkeit suggeriert, Homosexualität sei in den NS-Organisationen weit verbreitet”.

the Jewish framework involved. Although this underscores the dichotomies of the movie itself, it raises questions of cultural implication. Can one create the two categories ‘Jewish’ and ‘homosexual’ in a movie set during the Third Reich and attempt to portray only one of them while rejecting the other? I would argue that the particular nature of the Holocaust as a foremost anti-Semitic event makes such an approach virtually impossible without generating discussion about legitimacy, truth and taste. In critiques of *Aimée & Jaguar* and other Holocaust movies this phenomenon is visible in statements about Holocaust movies since the 1990s that employ “quoting the Holocaust devoid of meaning [...], an extended view on other victim groups” and display “a not exclusive Jewish victim group”<sup>44</sup> (Goede 27ff.). Another author concludes that “it has come under fire among Jewish critics particularly for its innocuous portrayal of Lilly Wust” and “reveals a level of sentimentalization [that] seems linked to a problematic redemptive national narrative” (Cormican 106). What these and other critics question is a focus on the wrong thing, an emphasis on the category ‘homosexual’ that blends out Jewishness as well as the victim-perpetrator problematic in the character of Lilly as a German Nazi. Understanding the necessity of the lesbian relationship, however, I would say that such an emphasis is needed and not necessarily misplaced.

A similar fact is also observable at another point in the movie when Felice’s grandma inquires about the fiancé she has not met yet. Her questions, directed at Ilse, show concern for Felice: “How is he? Who is he? Can he feed her? What does he look

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<sup>44</sup> “Sinnentleertes Zitieren des Holocaust [...], ausgeweiteter Blick auf weitere Opfergruppen” and “eine nicht ausschließlich jüdische Opfergruppe”.

like? [...] When will he take her away” (Färberböck 42:30).<sup>45</sup> That Felice fabricated a lie to placate her grandma is evident as much in Ilse’s irritation at the question as through the pleading and alarming gaze Felice directs towards her. Instead of telling her grandmother about her identity as a lesbian she chooses to invent an elaborate story about an absent fiancé. Here, generational differences are probably to blame as much as knowledge that belonging to a minority group does not preclude one from oppressing – or not sympathizing with – other minorities. As a Jew herself it is improbable that the grandmother would report her to the Germans, unlike family members did in the stories collected by Claudia Schoppmann. It is more likely a matter of different generations with Felice not wanting to shock or burden her grandma in the then-current difficult circumstances. I would say, however, that it is a self-imposed act of discrimination by Felice given that she could open up to her grandma. The inevitable hurt, pain and shame that are inflicted through this dialogue are woven like a red thread through Felice’s life and stand as the quintessence of lesbian persecution.

Yet another interesting moment in the movie in regards to social acceptance of lesbian women can be found in the scene between Lilly, Felice and Lilly's parents as Felice is introduced. The aforementioned comparison between recognition of lesbian identity and Jewish identity is played out in the stunned exclamations made by Herr and Frau Wust. While one zooms in on the Jewish identity, the other focuses on sexual identity: “‘Jewish.’ ‘And a lesbian.’ ‘Well, that is... that is...’” (1:37:55).<sup>46</sup> Although both revelations could be potentially dangerous to the women – and the parents! –, the

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<sup>45</sup> “Wie ist er? Wer ist er? Kann er sie ernähren? Wie sieht er aus? [...] Wann wird er sie wegbringen?”.

<sup>46</sup> “‘Jüdin.’ ‘Und lesbisch.’ ‘Ja, das ist... das ist...’”.

movie glosses over this rather important fact in an indifferent manner. With a light joke the explosive atmosphere is assuaged and the parents welcome Felice into the family without further ado. Portraying Felice's coming out as a Jew, a lesbian and the lover of Lilly in this manner is a stark contrast to Felice's attempt of keeping her grandmother in the dark about her sexual identity. Yet the reasons for her secrecy are easily comprehended if one keeps in mind two facts: age and religion. Felice's thought process could either be attributed to the Jewish stance on homosexuality or be seen as a matter of dealing with an older generation and wanting to spare herself any arguments born from different generational views on sexual identity. For Lilly's parents, the German heritage of the parents needs to be seen as the significant factor. Throughout the movie the parents are depicted as opponents of the Nazis and "good" Germans. Their status as Germans protects them from the persecution Felice or her grandma are subjected to as Jews, although they do have to tread carefully as outspoken opponents of Hitler and supporters of communism. Without the danger of detection or imminent deportation and death hanging over their heads, however, this German couple can afford to welcome the Jewish lover of their newly-outed daughter into the family. The happiness that ensues after this short exchange highlights how portraying Jewish and lesbian persecution happening on two separate levels with the love story as a vehicle amplifies the persecution of Jews while at the same time almost completely obfuscating that lesbians were also persecuted on account of their sexual orientation. By keeping the focus on the love story between Felice and Lilly, a quest for happiness has become the central point of the movie. While Felice and Lilly work on finding their happiness, the Germans are out to find them and in the measure that they are happy and able to show it, they also make it easier for the

Germans to hunt them down. An example of how this plays out can be seen in Günther Wust's fit of rage after Lilly demands a divorce and, following that, the reaction of all the other 'U-Boote' about how Lilly is endangering all of them with her actions.<sup>47</sup> As has been mentioned before about the role of women in Nazism, divorce was not part of a woman's role and acting different from normative roles invited questions. Against this backdrop the deportation scene can also be interpreted as the logical conclusion to the extraordinary day Felice and Lilly have spent together. They are physically out in the open and their love is tangible; they freeze the moment in time through pictures of them together. And while they are still savoring their happiness the SS-Officers await them with crushing cruelty. The measure of both their suffering is directly proportional to the happiness they had shared only shortly before. In fact, without a display of their careless day the impact of both their pain would be diminished. In this context the importance of pictures as proof of sexual orientation is noticeable. It was the picture found on Lotte after she had been shot that leads the Gestapo to Felice and Lilly. The picture of a fleeting moment of two women sitting closely together, conveying love and intimacy, captures not only the image of Felice and Lotte but much later also literally Felice trying to escape the Nazis.

The crucial kissing scene prior to Felice's deportation is yet another instance in which persecution due to lesbianism or Jewishness is conflated into one singular event. Ordered by an officer hidden in the shadows of the room to kiss one last time, an understanding is evoked that the Gestapo is present to incarcerate both Lilly and Felice due to their illicit lesbian relationship. That the relationship is indeed a homosexual one is

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<sup>47</sup> Submarine (Unterseeboot), term given to people who went into hiding.

conveyed through the act of kissing and intensified by the officer's voyeuristic insistence to repeat the kiss as it “will be the last” (1:45:26).<sup>48</sup> As discussed previously in the analysis of the Nazis’ sexual policies and their view of women, any sexual act involving women was perceived as solely taking place for male gratification and the benefit of the German Reich. Though there may not have been encouragement by the regime to watch lesbian acts, the voyeurism of the officer in the scene can be presumed to stem from the anti-feminine stance of the German government. He is at once playing out his male dominance over women by watching the intimacy between Felice and Lilly from the shadows while also demonstrating his control as a member of the ruling party by “allowing” it. Drawing the attention of the audience to the intimate nature of the relationship serves to distract from what happens next and why. Felice is torn from Lilly, attempts to escape but is finally captured in the neighbor’s apartment. Two things are striking in this scene and mark it again not as persecution against lesbians but Jews: Lilly, also quite clearly a lesbian, is not taken away by the Gestapo; and more importantly the officer confronting the neighbors who are trying to hide Felice does not confront them with the fact that Lilly and Felice are lesbians but instead states that they knew she was a Jew.

Another subtle glimpse of what consequences an open expression of lesbian love could have had is an utterance by Ilse after Felice has been deported to Theresienstadt. She chides Lilly for trying to visit her beloved Felice, knowing that such an expression of feelings towards a Jew could lead to her death. Even in this statement, however, problems of defining boundaries between a lesbian relationship and a close female friendship

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<sup>48</sup> “Machen ‘se nur weiter. Noch einen Kuss. Der Letzte”.

become obvious. Without the explicit sexual acts that the love story conveys, the relationship between Felice and Lilly could well have been a close female friendship in which one friend tried to rescue the other. The fact that Lilly, as the German, the mother of four and decorated with the Cross of Honor of the German Mother (Mutterkreuz), is in a position of providing relatively safe shelter and food is a problematic part of the movie that also needs to be explored. Some critics of the movie mention that the relationship between Lilly and Felice wasn't one of set on equal footing. Esther Dischereit writes: "Felice Schragenheim is never in a 'free' relationship, or to say it differently: it has a very definite character of prostitution. How else could it be. One has a valid passport, the other doesn't, is wanted, one only had to find her and she is dead" (Dischereit).<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the relationship between Aimée and Jaguar as one of prostitution is possible but only if one ignores the timeline of events in the movie. To the audience it is disclosed by minute 06:30 of the film that Felice is Jewish. While everyone around her is leaving to seek shelter from the air raid someone calls after her, then lifts the lapel of her coat to reveal that she is not wearing a yellow star. The confession Felice makes to Lilly Wust about her Jewishness, however, does not take place until one hour and 30 minutes into the movie. At 1:33:36 Felice admits "I am Jewish, Lilly" and at 1:57:00 the final credits mark the end of the movie.<sup>50</sup> I would refute Dischereit's argument by pointing out that for the majority of the film Lilly is not aware that Felice is Jewish. She knew that something was strange, indicated by her hysteric rant before Felice discloses her Jewishness: "I have

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<sup>49</sup> "Felice Schragenheim jedenfalls befindet sich zu keinem Zeitpunkt in einem "freien" Liebesverhältnis, oder anders ausgedrückt: es hat einen deutlich prostitutiven Zug. Wie könnte es auch anders sein. Die eine hat einen funktionierenden Pass, die andere nicht, wird gesucht, man braucht sie bloß zu finden, und sie ist schon tot".

<sup>50</sup> "Ich bin Jüdin, Lilly".



understood that there always has to be something that I am not allowed to know!”  
(Färberböck 1:30:49).<sup>51</sup> Yet, she had no idea what it was that kept Felice away from her or with her. While Dischereit’s analysis thus may ring true for Erica Fischer’s book I do not think there is an element of prostitution in the movie. Felice, Jaguar, at first hid in the basement of the newspaper office she worked at and it never becomes clear why she leaves to move in with Lilly, other than because she makes the conscious decision to do so.

Believable cases can be made for Felice using Lilly to survive.<sup>52</sup> An indicator is Ilse very early on mentioning that Felice, to her, was many people and that she was able to manipulate people through her charm. Her jealousy that Felice can never pass up “anything with blonde locks like mine” is also a reference to Felice seeing Lilly the first time and being intrigued by her. The movie implicitly touches on the Jewish victim vs. German savior part of their relationship without ever making it explicit that Felice may be using Lilly precisely because she is German and can protect her. Two references are made in this regard, one by Ilse before Ilse’s father throws out Felice, and one by the whole lesbian circle after Lilly reveals that she wants to file for divorce. Sitting together in Lilly’s kitchen after she has told a flabbergasted Günther that she wants to divorce him because she has never loved him, Felice thunders “What? What did you do? Are you crazy?” and Klärchen chimes in: “If he goes to court we will all be finished” (1:16:44).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> “Ich habe verstanden, dass es immer etwas geben muss was ich nicht wissen darf!”

<sup>52</sup> While comparably convincing cases can be made for Lilly being the one who uses Felice, these rely on the information from Fischers documentary biography. The movie does not offer details for such an interpretation.

<sup>53</sup> “Was? Was hast du? Bist du verrückt?” and “Wenn er vor Gericht geht sind wir alle erledigt”.

Here, the status of Lilly as a German is emphasized and underscored by the choice of the director to represent Lilly as the blonde German housewife vis-à-vis the stereotypical dark-haired Jewish Felice.

Similarly stereotypical is the representation of gender role expressions as set forth by the National Socialists and the way lesbian women were thought to twist them on the other. At the beginning of the movie Lilly Wust is the epitome of the ideal Aryan woman. She is a mother staying at home with her children – four boys – whom she devotedly cares for and doesn't want to send away to the country. Although she has an affair, or multiple according to Ilse, she fulfills her duty as a wife when her husband is home (45:02). After Günther has found out that Lilly has been sleeping with Felice, he urges her to stand up to the lesbians upstairs in the apartment: "Go to them, show them what a woman is and a mother" (1:15:46).<sup>54</sup> For him, it is clear that a woman can only have two roles, that of a mother and that of a wife. He is willing to forget what he saw as long as she stays in line with these two responsibilities.

Quite interesting when it comes to women's gender expression is the way both Felice and Lilly are dressed. Except for one short scene, Lilly, for example, is depicted throughout the movie wearing dresses or a dress and an apron. The one exception that shows her in a pantsuit shortly before her birthday party displays an air of unnaturalness and dress-up play. While she is standing in front of a mirror, admiring herself, she also tries smoking a cigarette. As inexperienced as she is at smoking – she starts coughing – she is at wearing pants, which stands in sharp contrast with the next shot in which she is

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<sup>54</sup> "Geh hin, zeig ihnen was ne Frau ist und Mutter".

wearing a blue ball gown and dances with Felice. Lilly's feminine attire looks much more natural on her than it does on Felice. Felice, by contrast, is only occasionally shown wearing dresses. For the most part she wears pantsuits, with blouses underneath sweaters and the collar showing. Lilly's birthday party is Felice's perfect occasion to dress up and she appears in a masculine black tuxedo with a black top hat. That she is not only dressed masculine but also knows how to play the role of the male seducer is accentuated by juxtaposing her with Lilly in the ball gown. Felice is the active part, initiating the dance and guiding Lilly where she wants her to go. Felice subverts the female role on a variety of levels, starting with the way she dresses, the fact that she works outside the home at an office, and that she is part of the resistance. The fact that she does any of that despite being a Jewish woman who moreover refuses to wear the yellow star, is additionally a subversion of the role ascribed to her as a Jew while simultaneously playing into the stereotype of the Jew as abnormal.

### 4.3 Novembermond

The 1985 West German movie *Novembermond* revolves around two women, the German November and the French Férial, who meet in Paris shortly before the beginning of World War II.<sup>55</sup> Soon after meeting each other they fall in love, an event that is closely

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<sup>55</sup> The DVD cover specifies it as a West German production, given that in 1985 the German Democratic Republic still existed. As far as a historical examination of the National Socialist past is concerned "die Euthanasie-Opfer, die Sinti und Roma, die 'Asozialen', die Homosexuellen und andere Minderheiten [gehören] zu den lange vergessenen Opfergruppen" (Danyel 191). An East German movie dealing with Jewishness and female homosexuality set during the Third Reich would have been impossible in light of the (non-)commemorative culture of the GDR.

followed by the German invasion of France. As a Jew, however, November has to go into hiding in order to escape arrest and deportation. Ferial and her mother attempt to hide November with relatives in the country, which, after an initial success, leads to November's discovery and amidst rape and psychological terror she tries to make her way back to Paris to be reunited with Ferial. Hidden in Ferial's apartment she avoids detection and both survive the war.

While the main characters seem to be in a similar situation as Felice and Lilly in *Aimée & Jaguar*, overt persecution or discrimination based on their sexual orientation does not take place in the movie. However, subtle hints do not escape notice. Asking about the status of her naturalization in France, the officer November talks to remarks: "Why don't you marry? You are pretty enough for it" (Grote 06:30).<sup>56</sup> Although he does not have any indication of her private life he assumes a heteronormative world view. His comment, though not meant as a proposition to marry *him*, leaves November at a loss for words. While I would not claim this incident to be a discriminatory act against a lesbian woman it does set up the stage early on for a reading of November's character as something else besides Jewish. Her uncomfortable silence as the only response to a rather harmless question and the ensuing conflicting emotions on her face are indicators for the audience that there is more to this than meets the eye. Ten more minutes into the movie this first impression is confirmed but still not explained. Laurent, who has met November at his mother's café and invited her to dinner, boldly declares "November I am in love with you" only to be rejected by November: "But I am not in love with you, Laurent. I

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<sup>56</sup> "Warum heiraten sie nicht? Hübsch genug sind sie doch".

like you very much” (16:50).<sup>57</sup> Whether he knows that November is in love with his sister is unclear at this point, although Laurent discourages a male friend of his from asking November on a date with a cryptic “You are not her type” (18:46).<sup>58</sup> The camera then proceeds to follow his look outside through a door that has been left ajar. Through Laurent’s male gaze the audience sees November and F  rial sitting in a dim room, immersed in conversation, arms around each other and exchanging hugs. A closeness loaded with romantic overtones is implied by the way the women face each other, how they look at each other and by the arm resting lightly on November’s shoulder. Yet by using Laurent’s male gaze that this scene must be interpreted as revealing sexual desire. It is crucial to note here that throughout the movie male characters facilitate communication of lesbian identity between November and F  rial. Men are thus given the authority to identify their relationship as something more than benign friendship, in turn also making it impossible for the female characters to claim their sexual attraction and desire as their own. Without the authority given to the male point of view the women’s relationship would have remained ambiguous. Only after Laurent has seen the two women like this does a conversation about the true nature of their relationship take place. Again, Laurent is depicted as taking male authority by initiating this conversation and through his choice of words a normative expectation is created as to what constitutes the rules of heterosexual relationships from a masculine – and thus authoritative – point of view.

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<sup>57</sup> “November, ich bin verliebt in sie” and “Aber ich nicht in sie, Laurent. Ich mag sie sehr”.

<sup>58</sup> “Du bist nicht ihr Typ”.

‘Férial, did she say I was in love with her?’ ‘No... no, she didn’t tell me that.’ ‘Not in my wildest dreams would I have thought I would be competing with my big sister.’ ‘Laurent, what shall we do about it’ ‘If you ask me, there isn’t much I can do. She has already chosen you!’ ‘It does happen.’ (19:24 – 20:00)

What stands out is Laurent’s understanding of love as a competition and choice without actually acting on it. The male pursuer vies for a female’s love until she ostensibly chooses him as the best suitable companion. This creates the view of female sexuality as being nothing more than a means to an end, the need to procreate, without any sexual lust and desire on the woman’s part. Thus, Laurent mirrors the view the National Socialists held towards female sexuality, though he does not go so far as to deny the existence of it. In fact, through his acknowledgement of the romantic relationship between Férial and November it is now possible for them to display their affection for each other. Before, this was only implied, but afterwards the women are shown holding hands, kissing and sleeping in the same bed (cf. 23:33). Any discriminatory acts against the women as lesbians only occur after Laurent has legitimized their lesbian relationship by conceding that it exists. It is arguable that even though Laurent is French the fact that he is male makes him a representative of the sexual normative values of the National Socialists. I would refute this, however, by directing attention to his nonchalant way of giving in and giving up. He does not fight his sister, does not force either Férial or November to submit to his will. In short, he acts as a gentleman.

In the next scene Férial and November are seen in a restaurant, this time openly showing their feelings for each other by holding hands and radiating a sense of intimacy. Eventually they get up to dance, first dancing with arms outstretched, then turning slowly as they hold each other close. The reactions this display of affection elicits from the

waiters and patrons are indignation, disgust and anxiety. “This is going too far. Garçon! Is this a nightclub? Would you tell the ladies that we do not wish to be disturbed?” says one man, causing the waiter to go up to the pair and plead: “You can’t dance here, this is a restaurant” (20:40). Instantly linking the two women to the setting of a nightclub conveys how sexual their dance is considered to be. It is not something to be done in public. And while one woman covers up her (female) child’s eyes exclaiming “This isn’t appropriate for you” the man sitting across from her is shown at the same time as following the women’s every move, staring, leering and – presumably – aroused by what he sees.<sup>59</sup> While it can be argued that they are dancing in order to avoid paying the bill, one of Laurent’s many tricks, it is noticeable that this is the only scene taking place in a public space where people can see November and Ferial being (somewhat) intimate with each other. This, I argue, is the essence of their sexuality being expressed mainly through the actions of the spectators and not themselves.

Compared to *Aimée & Jaguar*, *Novembermond* remains fairly nonsexual, so much so that a review in the TAZ from August 1989 cites a review by the women’s magazine *Emma*:

That’s what I have to put up with! I’m sitting in the theater and next to me, in front of me and behind me are men who notice That’s lesbian love, lesbian sexuality, so boring, so uninspired, paraded and staged by women who should know better. I have to be ashamed of this.<sup>60</sup> (“Flimmern & Rauschen”)

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<sup>59</sup> While male homosexuality is mostly viewed as revolting, the image of two women caressing each other tends to be seen as positively arousing by men. Leaving female homosexuality free from persecution can thus also be understood as an act benefitting the male population in patriarchal Nazi society.

<sup>60</sup> “Das muß ich mir bieten lassen! Da sitz’ ich im Kino, neben, vor und hinter mir Männer, die zur Kenntniss nehmen: Das ist lesbische Liebe, lesbische Sexualität, so

Indeed, watching the movie as someone self-identifying as a lesbian is unsatisfactory at best and disappointing at worst. The representation of lesbian love does not go beyond a depiction of silent, shy kisses and long shots of gazing into each other's eyes, leaving any sexual activity to the imagination of the audience. What is shown are naked feet under a blanket and a landlady who enters, then exits the room swiftly with a short "Pardon" (Grote 23:33) after she has seen Ferial and November sleeping in one bed.<sup>61</sup> In the case of the landlady the act of leaving can be viewed as tactful, yet the cinematographic arrangements throughout the movie are similarly tame. The absence of explicit sex scenes may be explained by the time of the production, the early 1980s, and the effect on the intended audience. A film presumably about lesbian women, Jewish women and the Holocaust – if one goes by the cover image and the description – targets women as the intended audience. Culturally held beliefs about lesbian relationships, sex between women, and how women view sex scenes on TV also influences the representation of sexual acts on screen. Another important aspect for an understanding of the cinematography is that Alexandra von Grote is a woman, a fact that could impact what choices are made about representation of women – and sex between women – on screen.

Persecution, when it does happen, is closely linked to November's Jewishness. From the threatening neighbors who intimidate her rescuers to the events that occur once the Germans have captured her, it is her religious affiliation that makes her a target for

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langweilig, so uninspiriert, vorgeführt und inszeniert von Frauen, die es wissen müssen. Da muß ich mich ja schämen".

<sup>61</sup> The rape scene on the other hand, though also not shown, is not quiet or subtle. The threatening General is displayed grabbing November, the camera leaves the room along with the younger soldier and as the audience hears November scream his face shows emotions of disgust and shame.



German violence. While she is taken away from the farm where she had been hiding because of her Jewishness, she is then subjected to sexual violation based on her sex. And though her rape metaphorically and literally happens behind closed doors, the audience can envision what is happening to November from the inhumane screams echoing in the corridor. Even her cry of “But I’m a Jew!” does not keep the Nazi officer from raping her (58:10ff.).<sup>62</sup> Unequivocal confirmation of the rape is the image of the general zipping up his pants, shoving a bleeding, beaten up November into the hallway and ordering guards to move her to the local Nazi brothel ‘Pompon Rouge.’ Neither this violation of her body, however, nor the subsequent abuse November endures at the hands of the men at the Pompon Rouge appear to be linked to her sexual identity. On the contrary, she is branded with the name of her sin while at the brothel, having the word ‘Jude’ (=Jew) tattooed on her arm.<sup>63</sup> When penetrating the surface, however, the connection between sexuality and anti-Semitism becomes discernible. In his study *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders* Raul Hilberg confirms “that gender indeed mattered during the Holocaust, that anti-Semitism, racism, and sexism were inextricably linked in Nazi theory and practice” (Hilberg). As a tool of control and repression, sexuality was the common denominator tying Germans and non-Germans, men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals together. Consequently, November’s treatment as a ‘subhuman’ Jewish woman can be viewed as an act of threefold persecution grounded in her identity as a Jew, a woman and a lesbian.

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<sup>62</sup> “Aber ich bin doch Jüdin”.

<sup>63</sup> Although records exist about brothels in concentration camps, the women forced to work there were selected by ‘racial’ criteria: “there is no evidence that Jewish women were ever knowingly used for *regulated* forced sex labor in official concentration camp brothels. Mostly, those selected to serve as prostitutes were in the asocial category” (Hedgepeth and Saidel 38). This makes the use of a Jewish woman like November in a brothel highly unlikely but not impossible.

The Nazi rapes her as a Jew, the male gaze meanwhile perceives women as arousing because of their sexuality.

Throughout the movie the Nazis who invaded France subject Férial to subtle discriminatory actions. As an apparently single woman she is pressured to work while trying to fend off the advances of men. In order to avoid being suspected of hiding a Jew she gains employment at a Nazi newspaper, which also brings her closer to Marcel, a male friend who works there. “‘Well, what can I do for you?’ ‘I am a good secretary... I want you to employ me.’ ‘Well...now...and may I ask why?’ ‘It has its advantages... Didn’t you say that yourself?’” (01:11:56).<sup>64</sup> The scene is set up in a way to suggest that there is more behind Férial’s request for work than she lets on, a point that is not lost on Marcel who seems to perceive it as a chance to flirt with her. Short from entering into a heterosexual marriage, which her role as a woman requires of her, Férial proceeds to perform a tightrope walk between encouraging Marcel to go out with her and not letting him get too close. Hence he is depicted as bringing her presents, from food to nylons, fulfilling his male role while she dresses up and appears on his arm as his escort.

The only act of active persecution that Férial faces in the last scene of the movie is similarly not addressing her sexual orientation. She is jeered at, dragged down the street and her hair is cut off because her fellow Frenchmen believe her to have cooperated with the Germans. The shame that the crowd wants to bring out into the open is directed at the French loyalty Férial apparently sold-out. These people have never seen November

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<sup>64</sup> “‘Nun, was hast du auf dem Herzen?’ ‘Ich bin eine gute Sekretärin, ich möchte bei euch arbeiten.’ ‘Sieh mal an. Und weshalb?’ ‘Weil das ganz schöne Vorteile hat. Das hast du doch selber gesagt, oder?’”.

or noticed her living in the apartment, a telltale sign of how well Ferial and her mother covered up the fact that they were hiding someone. What they did notice were frequent visits by the hated German occupiers and Ferial dressed up and going out with one. It is not a far-fetched idea to also connect this hair cutting and shaming as well as the way it is done with the way Jewish people were treated in the German concentration camps upon arrival. I would argue that in both cases the act of cutting off hair and, more importantly, the way it is done is designed to shame the victim.<sup>65</sup> Ferial is dragged across the square, cornered and held down while someone cuts off her hair in front of a jeering crowd. She does not have a chance to defend herself or explain. While November – the Jew – is looking on from the back and finally makes her way towards the front of the scene, Ferial is treated the same way Nazis were ‘welcoming’ Jewish prisoners to their concentration camps. The roles are reversed, the love story between two women an irrelevancy within the big picture of the movie. The person first coming to the aid of Ferial is not November but her brother Laurent, another French citizen and immediate family member. November, the lover, ideally the more important person in Ferials’ life, is far away and engaged in taking the first steps in a world not out to hunt her anymore. The different identities that can be seen, the various labels that can be assigned to both women, are (apparent) Nazi-collaborator, Jewish victim, and lesbian women. But the last label – or identity – that of the lesbian, disappears completely behind the former two.

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<sup>65</sup> In an article published in *Women and the Holocaust* Myrna Goldenberg describes the entrance process at Auschwitz-Birkenau as witnessed by a survivor: “After the humiliating process of being shaved, she felt so dehumanized, so alone and so deeply depressed, that she prepared a noose with which to hang herself” (Goldenberg 328).

*Novembermond* does not play with gender stereotypes as much as *Aimée & Jaguar* does. November and Ferial are usually shown wearing dresses or skirts, with a blouse and blazer although Ferial looks much more masculine in them. Her blouse is always buttoned-up all the way whereas November wears hers in a more feminine style



Figure 4.1: Ferial & November. Grote, Alexandra von. *November Moon*. Ottokar Runze Filmproduktion, Sender Freies Berlin (SFB), Sun 7 Productions, 1985. Film.

with the topmost buttons unbuttoned. Figure 4.1 shows the first time Ferial and November meet, portraying them wearing what can be considered masculine pantsuits (17:28). This is the only time in the movie that they are shown dressed in a very masculine way, yet they still do not fit the stereotype of the overly masculine lesbian.

Although both *Aimée & Jaguar* and *Novembermond* can be said to depict persecution of lesbians only subtly, making lesbian women invisible in the process, one very positive and important aspect can be taken away from them regarding visibility. In attempting to weave together the threads of lesbian love between a non-Jew and a Jew, or a German and a French woman with a Jewish woman, the movies shine a light on lesbian relationships. Both films are celebrations of lesbian love and lesbian relationships,

regardless of its representation of persecution, for the visibility they create. *Aimee & Jaguar* especially, with a broader intended audience than Novembermond and a wider distribution.

## **Chapter 5 – Memorials**

For an analysis of how lesbian persecution during the Holocaust is represented in various forms of text, it is necessary to include an evaluation of how Holocaust memorials commemorate lesbian victims. While the term ‘memorial’ is most often assumed to refer to a site of mourning the past, ‘monuments’ are commonly understood as markers of triumph and victory celebration. The Holocaust has provided many spatial places of mourning, memorial sites, yet also monuments that evade the triumphant celebratory nature ascribed to them. Holocaust monuments in Germany take on a special meaning because they, moreover, serve as memorial sites, sites of contemplation and abstract man-made references erected not by the victims but by the perpetrators. I will thus use the terms memorial and monuments interchangeably as they both in this context denote a place of memory, regardless of their status as victim, perpetrator or bystander.

As explored in the chapter on the construction of memory, membership in a shared collective creates a group conscience and collective memory/history. Memorials “provide the site where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves, places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their ‘shared’ stories of the past” (Young 7). Having shown the lack of representation of lesbian persecution in the previous chapters, combined with the similar lack of acknowledgment of persecution, one can assume that a collective lesbian history of the Holocaust never developed. I started out the introduction with the controversy around the ‘Homodenkmal’ in Berlin in 1998,

and I will conclude my analysis by evaluating memorials in Germany and how they include or exclude lesbian persecution. I chose the memorial *Frankfurter Engel* in Frankfurt (unveiled 1994), the *Memorial for the Gay and Lesbian Victims of National Socialism* in Cologne (unveiled 1995) and the Berlin *Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism* (erected 2008). In their differences and similarities, these monuments exemplify the various problematic aspects inherent in remembering male and female homosexual victims of the Holocaust. Form, location, and inscription are the defining characteristics of most memorials, standing in for what is to be remembered and often revealing as much about the site of the memorial as the monument itself.

### 5.1 Cologne Pink Triangle Memorial

The Memorial for the Gay and Lesbian Victims of the Holocaust in Cologne was erected in 1995 and is located close to the Rhine near the Hohenzollern Bridge (Hohenzollernbrücke), a prominent meeting place for anonymous sex among homosexual men during the Weimar Republic and the initial years of the Third Reich. A pink granite triangle, 120cm in height, standing on its edge and wedged between two grey slabs of stone displays the artist's vision of duality. Achim Zinkann describes it as

two blocks, two colors, two cuts, joined together to a whole. A grey, a pink block. Parts of one society. Men, women. Lesbians and gays, depressing each other, rubbing against each other, interlocked, lifting each other. I will leave any further interpretation to the viewer.<sup>1</sup> (Lenk)

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<sup>1</sup> "Zwei Blöcke, zwei Farben, zwei Schnitte, zu einem Ganzen zusammengefügt. Ein grauer, ein rosa Block. Teile einer Gesellschaft. Männer, Frauen. Lesben, Schwule, einander bedrückend, sich aneinander reibend, ineinander aufgehoben, sich bedingend. Weitere Interpretationen überlasse ich dem Betrachter".

Zinkann has given his memorial for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust a meaning that transcends the time of National Socialism by invoking a male-female duality not found in its equality in the Third Reich. His conceptual design of two blocks, colors and cuts that are joined together does not refer to the heteronormative meaning of sexually fitting opposite genitals together but a whole, which acknowledges both lesbians and gays as equal victims of the Holocaust. While such a reading of victim equality is supported by the dedication inscribed on the memorial, a further look at the design reveals a definite trend towards mostly indirectly remembering gay men. Using the pink triangle as a symbol for remembrance of Nazi crimes against homosexuals is problematic for several reasons, most notably for the fact that it was the National Socialists symbol for the categorization of gay prisoners in concentration camps. In essence, memorials employing the pink triangle adopt the symbol their oppressors used to classify and stigmatize them to remember homosexual victims. While it could be argued that this is also a form of reappropriation, I doubt this is the case here. Reappropriation necessitates using a word – or in this case a symbol – to refer to oneself. Yet it is the rainbow flag and anything rainbow-colored that has become the symbol for the lesbian and gay movement, not the pink triangle.<sup>2</sup> In Insa Eschebach's *Homophobie und Devianz*, Klaus Müller contextualizes the use of the pink triangle as a new interpretation of the 1970s gay and lesbian movement but labels it questionable:

The change of the pink triangle from the National Socialist marker of the subhuman to the collectively proud characteristic of homosexuals in the

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<sup>2</sup> An image search online and scanning advertisements aimed at lesbian and gay customers in print and online media revealed that the instances in which a pink triangle was used were few and far between. It was mostly the triangular shape that could be seen as the basis for rainbow-themed paraphernalia.



1970s and 1980s suggests an indentation of history that still appears abridged. [...] The political signal remained an abstract symbol: It is reminiscent of the pink triangle but ignores those who were forced to wear it. The National Socialist invention of the pink triangle rose to become the international symbol of ‘gay and lesbian pride’ because we weren’t ‘persecuted’ by individual and collective memories of the persecuted. Our memories remained impersonal.<sup>3</sup> (Müller 129)

Consequently, what looked like an inclusive memorial for gay *and* lesbian victims of the Holocaust must already be questioned as such after having examined the design and the influence for the design. The pink triangle was reserved for male homosexuals, lesbians were – if anything – classified as asocial and had to wear a black triangle (cf. “Chart of Prisoner Markings”).



Figure 5.1: Cologne Pink Triangle

Lenk, Jörg. “Gestaltung - Rosa Winkel Mahnmal.” *Mahnmal für die Schwulen und Lesbischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*. 30 Nov. 2012. Web. 14 Feb. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> “Der Wandel des rosa Winkel vom nationalsozialistischen Kennzeichen des Untermenschen zum kollektiv-stolzen Erkennungszeichen Homosexueller in den 1970er- und 1980er- Jahren suggeriert eine Verzahnung der Geschichte, die heute bei allem Verständnis verkürzend wirkt. [...] Das politische Signal blieb letztendlich ein abstraktes Zeichen: Es erinnert an den rosa Winkel, nicht aber an die, die gezwungen waren, ihn zu tragen. Die nationalsozialistische Erfindung des rosa Dreiecks wurde zum internationalen Symbol von ‘gay and lesbian pride’, weil wir nicht ‘verfolgt’ wurden von individuellen und konkreten Erinnerungen an die Verfolgten. Unsere Erinnerungen waren unpersönlich”.

Though one could argue that the artist Zinmann incorporated lesbian victims with the grey stone slab, which envelops the pink triangle, without background knowledge of the classification system such an interpretation remains superficial. While many Jewish Holocaust memorials incorporate the Star of David into their design it is important to distinguish between the history of this symbol as opposed to the triangle that was invented by the Nazis. The Star of David has had meaning in Judaism long before Nazism adopted it either as the supposed shape of King David's shield or an emblem on it – it is thus historically grown and accepted as part of Judaism. Today, the star is also on the flag of the State of Israel, without any connection to the Nazi usage of it as the yellow star of Jewish shame. Contrasting these examples grants insights into the choices that victims of the Holocaust have made to commemorate their suffering. In an attempt to take away the power of the symbol of oppression, memorials for homosexual victims of the Holocaust similarly incorporate the pink triangle – the symbol of their oppression – in the act of remembrance most of the time. Unfortunately, however, it is also an indicator that lesbian victims are excluded on a non-verbal level even if they are mentioned explicitly in the inscription of the memorials. Thus even the culture of memory has pushed lesbian victims to the margins, excluding them by utilizing the singularly male symbol for homosexuality in concentration camps and keeping them from having the chance of being recognized as equally having been victims of persecution within the camp apparatus.

Contrary to this notion, the inscription embossed on the flat topside of the pink triangle is a confirmation of the inclusive interpretation intended by the artist. It reads: “Killed, Silenced” on one side and in a 180° angle to these words the dedication “To the

Gay and Lesbian Victims of National Socialism” (Lenk).<sup>4</sup> In contrast to other memorials that focus attention on the term ‘persecuted’ (verfolgt),<sup>5</sup> the inscription of the pink triangle in Cologne centers on two things: First, that homosexuals were brutally killed and second that homosexuals were denied their identity by being silenced. The German word ‘totgeschwiegen’ literally translates to ‘having been silenced to death’, in the sense that no one was able – or willing? – to talk about someone or something. It is a verb already in the past tense, conveying the long period of time that has passed until remembrance became possible in 1994/1995 as well as the circumstances of silence during the Nazi era. I would argue that it is much more than just a suitable description for the persecution of lesbian women and what happened to them after 1945. An indicator for this is the positioning of the two terms ‘killed’ and ‘silenced’ on the triangle. Although they are on the same side of the triangle there is a spatial distance between the two. One is at the top, farther away from the viewer and the other one is located at the bottom. The empty space in between the term communicates both the things that were left unspoken and are lost to the later generation as well as those things deemed too harsh to engrave on a memorial. In a sense the space is a canvas for each viewer, which can be filled with his or her own words that are evoked by the terms ‘killed’ and ‘silenced.’ The viewer takes a metaphorical road from death to life – or vice versa – when approaching the memorial from this side. In order to take in the rest of the memorial and connect the words with the

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<sup>4</sup> “Totgeschlagen, Totgeschwiegen. Den Schwulen und Lesbischen Opfern des Nationalsozialismus”.

<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on persecution is especially prominent in monuments memorializing the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, which makes sense as they were targeted exponentially and most viciously for annihilation. In light of the arguments that center around Paragraph §175 and its exclusivity for male homosexuals, including lesbians as part of Holocaust memorials means being aware of the terms one wants to use.

meaning of the memorial, the viewer has to walk around the triangle to read the dedication right side up. There is no taking in the meaning of the memorial, the scope of the persecution of gays and lesbians, without the viewer making a geographical shift themselves. Even then, the other side of the memorial eludes the viewer as soon as the shift has been made. The duality that the artist wanted to evoke with his creation thus stands as an opposite for two distinct victim groups with two diverse histories of persecution. Without diminishing the suffering of either victim group, the Cologne Memorial for Gay and Lesbian Victims of the Holocaust thus manages to establish a space of remembrance that integrates the historical differences between gay and lesbian persecution.<sup>6</sup> The inscription and its placement can therefore be said to take the design of the monument a little further, explicitly including lesbian victims but making it clear that there were different degrees of suffering and persecution between male and female homosexuals.

The location of the Cologne memorial, next to the Hohenzollern Bridge and in an area that had historically been a cruising site for male homosexuals looking for anonymous sex, reiterates the exclusion of lesbian victims. The same constructive criticism that can be employed to the flaws in design, which excludes lesbians by using the pink triangle, can be applied to the choice of location. Historically, the geographical space of the monument only has value for those who are aware of its history and any

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<sup>6</sup> Originally the city of Cologne wanted to have the words 'gay' and 'lesbian' replaced with the more neutral term 'homosexuals.' After some political back and forth and with support of the Green party, however, the wording was left up to the initiators of the memorial.

connection to *Klappensex* can only be assumed for gay men, not for lesbian women.<sup>7</sup> The Cologne memorial for the gay *and lesbian victims* of the Holocaust is thus an ambiguous illustration that takes into account the differences in persecution:

Although there was no systematic persecution of lesbians during National Socialism they are explicitly named in the inscription of the monument because their lives and infrastructure were equally influenced by the Nazis.<sup>8</sup> (Lenk)

Nevertheless, one can question why both location and design of the monument were so heavily influenced by references to points of gay significance. Numerous sites downtown were identified beforehand, which served as meeting places for both gays and lesbians during the 1920s and 1930s. Unfortunately, Cologne's landscape designer, Georg Penker, who determined the location for the monument (cf. Lenk), made the decision to push the monument to the margin of Cologne. His choice, which can be presumed to be based on his knowledge of only male homosexual persecution during the Holocaust is a mechanism, I argue, that still echoes the invisibility the lesbian victims of the Holocaust suffer. That there is a memorial that unambiguously names the victim groups, must be viewed as a positive development in the representation of lesbian persecution during the Holocaust. Although the form of the monument and the location at the Hohenzollern Bridge is still only a tribute to gay men and their known (read: visible) anonymous sex site, the invisibility of lesbians is combated and becomes visible through the inscription and the allusion of having been 'silenced.'

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<sup>7</sup> Anonymous sex in public restrooms, the term exclusively applies to male homosexuals.

<sup>8</sup> "Obwohl es im Nationalsozialismus keine systematische Verfolgung von Lesben gab, werden diese in der Aufschrift des Mahnmals ausdrücklich erwähnt, weil auch ihre Lebensumstände und ihre Infrastruktur vom Nationalsozialismus betroffen waren".

## 5.2 Frankfurt's Angel

As the first memorial for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust, the *Frankfurter Engel* (Frankfurt's Angel) was unveiled in 1994 in the middle of downtown Frankfurt and the center of the existing homosexual culture scene.<sup>9</sup> Interesting about the location of the memorial are two facts: First, that there is not historical reference to homosexual subculture of the National Socialist era. The initiators of the memorial were aware that choosing one of these historically important places would have had a major drawback, "they were and are located far away and remote; they would have moved the memorial out of the public's eye instead of having integrated it into daily life" (IMH e.V.).<sup>10</sup> Thus another marginalization of the victims was prevented; in its place gay and lesbian present cultural meeting places were honored. Secondly, apart from its noteworthy location in the immediate proximity to the heart of downtown Frankfurt, the square was intentionally designed for the place of the memorial. Originally only a public parking place, the redevelopment has turned the site into "a beloved meeting place in the gay and lesbian scene and is commonly referred to as 'village square'" (IMH).<sup>11</sup> Unlike the memorial in Cologne, located at the boundary of the city in a place historically known for the imagined infamous, anonymous, and dangerous aspect of homosexual encounters, the memorial site in Frankfurt is oriented towards inclusiveness and a celebration of the

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<sup>9</sup> Memorial plaques had been installed in Mauthausen concentration camp as early as 1984, but the first actual monument not built on or near a concentration camp was Frankfurt's Angel.

<sup>10</sup> "Sie lagen und liegen auch heute noch abseits und hätten das Mahnmal eher aus dem öffentlichen Blick gerückt als in das Leben eingebunden".

<sup>11</sup> "In der schwul-lesbischen Szene ist er heute ein beliebter Treffpunkt und wird allgemein auch als »Dorfplatz« bezeichnet".

things yet to come.<sup>12</sup> It is not only integrated in the landscape of the city, but also *alive* and welcoming with benches to meet and rest.

That the memorial is integrated into the landscape and inclusive of both genders is also visible in the form of the monument, which deviates from the commonly used symbol of the pink triangle.<sup>13</sup> As the name suggests, the statue of an angel dominates the center of the memorial square. Artist Rosemarie Trockel used the reproduction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century angel that was initially part of a series for the western entrance of the dome of Cologne but changed its meaning by cutting off the head and attaching it slightly misaligned. The breaking point is still visible as a scar on the neck of the angel. Various interpretations of this act include its violence, the remnant of a scar where the break can and will never heal and the misaligned head, which seems only ever so slightly out of place. It seems like a nod to Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* and the interpretations by Walter Benjamin about the angel of history that anxiously has his eyes wide open and wings spread,

the angel's face is turned to the past and where we perceive a chain of events, the angel sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and entangled itself in his wings. The storm propels the angel forward, into the future to which the angel's back is

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<sup>12</sup> The only sign of it being a space of remembrance for male homosexuals, which the newly developed space carries, is the name it was given once the memorial had been put in place. Named after Klaus Mann the reference to male homosexuality subtly aligns the otherwise neutral space with gayness when it comes to sexual orientation.

<sup>13</sup> Of the 19 memorials for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust that exist worldwide at the writing of this dissertation, 14 make the pink triangle a central part of reference to the group of victims. Prominent examples are the San Francisco "Pink Triangle and Memorial Park" consisting of 15 triangular-shaped steles with pink inlays on top, and the Amsterdam "Homomonument" made up of three smaller pink triangles laid in the ground which form a bigger triangle in its entirety.

turned while the pile of wreckage grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.<sup>14</sup> (Benjamin and Raulet 182)

Rosemarie Trockel's angel is a memorial for past suffering and persecution in the present, with injuries of its own where the storm and wreckage of the past have wounded it, yet it is still standing and reminding the viewer that there is a future ahead. Embedded in the surroundings of inclusiveness and intentional redevelopment of its location, Trockel's memorial suggests an unusual approach to the culture of Holocaust memorials. Without drawing on the symbols of the oppressors, i.e. pink triangle, sites of terror; without focusing exclusively on the suffering of the victims the artist created a design mindful of the persecution while demonstrating that memory is kept alive by those who keep on living.

In the figure of the angel, Rosemarie Trockel additionally accomplishes navigating the male versus female homosexual persecution debate successfully. Because the angel is neither male nor female, nor visible as a symbol of solely male homosexual persecution, the viewer has the choice of how to perceive the statue. In the accompanying book available about the history of the monument in Frankfurt, Jean-Christophe Ammann reflects that the angel "isn't only male/female, it is also subject and object. As it focuses desire on [the angel] it also embodies a form of enlightenment. Enlightenment about 'being different' likewise constitutes the character of the angel" and adds that in its

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<sup>14</sup> "Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor uns erscheint, da sieht er eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat [und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann]. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist dieser Sturm".



androgynous form it comes closer to our actual human experience of being and the enlightenment perception of 'being different' (IMH).<sup>15</sup>

Lesbians are also explicitly mentioned in the inscription on the pedestal the angel is mounted on, without differentiating as much as emphasizing the similarities of being humans capable of love:

Homosexual men and women were persecuted and murdered. The crimes were denied, the dead concealed. The survivors were disdained and condemned. We bear witness to this with the knowledge that men who love men and women who love women can always be persecuted again.<sup>16</sup>  
(IMH)

Like the statue itself, which integrates past and present, suffering and hope, the words on the pedestal echo recognition of suffering without creating a hierarchy. Men *and* women were persecuted and murdered; survivors – regardless of their gender – were disdained and condemned. Here, lesbian persecution is not subordinate or a post-scriptum to gay persecution. It is acknowledged as equal to the suffering of gay men for the events of the past and observed as a possibility for the future. With an emphasis on love rather than sexual behavior the inscription breaks free of the Nazi definition and role expectations for gender-appropriate behavior. Instead of focusing on procreation, the sexual act, dominant men and subordinate females, women loving women (or men loving men) centers on cherishing another person without being subjected to a state-agenda.

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<sup>15</sup> "Er ist nicht nur männlich/weiblich, er ist auch Subjekt und Objekt. So wie er Begehren auf sich fokussiert, verkörpert er auch eine Form der Erkenntnis. Die Erkenntnis des »Andersseins« konstituiert gleichsam das Wesen des Engels".

<sup>16</sup> "Homosexuelle Männer und Frauen wurden im Nationalsozialismus verfolgt und ermordet. Die Verbrechen wurden verleugnet und die getöteten verschwiegen. Die Überlebenden verachtet und verurteilt. Daran erinnern wir in dem Bewusstsein, dass Männer die Männer lieben und Frauen die Frauen lieben immer wieder verfolgt werden können".



Figure 5.2: Frankfurter Angel. Memorial in Frankfurt, Germany.  
IHM e.V. “Frankfurter Engel – Mahnmahl Homosexuellenverfolgung.” *Frankfurter Engel*.  
Web. 15. Feb. 2015.

### 5.3 Berlin’s ‘Homomonument’

Within walking distance from the Brandenburg Gate, concealed in a secluded spot of the Tiergarten Park and diagonally across from the ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe’ is the ‘Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under Nazism.’ The central location of the monument in close proximity to the Reichstag unites multiple important factors. It is a reminder of the power exercised by the Nazi state and its officials in persecuting homosexuals, it points to the failure of the Federal Republic of Germany to keep §175 in an unrevised form until 1969, and yet at the same time it stands as tangible evidence for the recognition of homosexuals as another victim group.<sup>17</sup> During the 83<sup>rd</sup> session of the German Bundestag in 2003 minister of state for culture and media Dr.

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<sup>17</sup> In 1969 the age of consent for legal homosexual acts between men was set at 18 years, only after the reunification of East and West Germany §175 was debated to be abolished and in 1994 it disappeared as a punishable offense from the penal code.

Christina Weiss delivered a keen speech about the importance of the monument and its location:

It is due time that homosexuals are remembered in the center of the German capital. Here, where the perpetrators did their deed, Heinrich Himmler ordered the installment of the headquarters for the fight against homosexuality and abortion in 1936. This is where roundups, arrests and denunciations took place. Those who criticize a memorial lane is created in the German capital with the memorials to the murdered Jews of Europe as well as the Sinti and Roma misjudge the dimension in which especially minorities were subjected to the systematic crimes of the National Socialists. It will not be concealed that the terror against the homosexuals was also terror against our culture. We want to remember this group of victims because it cannot be kept secret what price those had to pay who disclosed their sexual orientation. Despite all awareness raising is the place that persecuted and murdered homosexuals take up in our collective memory not very stable.<sup>18</sup> (Weiss)

Sidestepping for a moment the issue of whether and how lesbian persecution is integrated in the Berlin memorial that Weiss advocated for, I want to draw attention to her thought-provoking statement about viewing terror against homosexuality as terror against the German culture. While it is arguably a sensitive matter to frame her argument in the context of terror against the German culture, given that she has previously contrasted it with the murdered Jews of the Holocaust, I argue that her framework of reference is the

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<sup>18</sup> “Es ist überfällig, dass in der Mitte der deutschen Hauptstadt auch der ermordeten Homosexuellen gedacht wird. Hier, wo die Täter ihr Handwerk versahen, ließ Heinrich Himmler 1936 eine Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung der Homosexualität und der Abtreibung einrichten, hier gab es Razzien und Verhaftungen, nicht zu vergessen Denunziationen in großem Stil. Wer kritisiert, in der deutschen Hauptstadt entstehe mit dem Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas und dem Denkmal für die ermordeten Sinti und Roma eine Gedenkmeile, der verkennet, in welchem Ausmaß gerade die Minderheiten von den systematischen Verbrechen der Nationalsozialisten betroffen waren. Es soll nicht verschwiegen sein, dass der Terror gegenüber den Homosexuellen auch ein Terror gegenüber unserer Kultur war. Wir wollen und wir werden dieser Opfergruppe gedenken, weil nicht verschwiegen werden darf, welchen Preis zu zahlen hatte, wer seine sexuelle Orientierung offenbarte. Trotz aller Aufklärungsarbeit in unseren Gedenkstätten ist der Platz, den die verfolgten und ermordeten Homosexuellen im kollektiven Gedächtnis einnehmen, noch nicht sehr gefestigt.”

understanding in German collective memory of Holocaust victimhood. Her statement thus needs to be understood as an appeal to the consciousness of those who see the work of remembrance as done, who do not want more money or resources poured into projects dedicated to creating spaces of memory.

Apart from the political importance of the location in the vicinity of the historical sites of persecution is also the proximity to the memorial to the murdered Jews. It seems like a demonstration of similarity, intended to express that there is no hierarchy in suffering. That there is such an intention – and that it can be taken even further from the location of the memorial to its design – becomes clear in the analysis of its form. One last interesting aspect about the location of the memorial in the Tiergarten Park is its relative disconnectedness from any historical meeting places of homosexuals before or after the Weimar Republic. Unlike the sites in Cologne and Frankfurt, where a relation to past or present homosexual subculture scenes exists, the location in Berlin evokes the negative image of anonymous, homosexual sex between men in dark corners of a park after dark. Such anonymity was mirrored in placing the unmarked cube a distance away from the two commemorative plaques that explain the purpose and history of the memorial to the viewer.

At first sight the black, unmarked cube seems like an oversized imitation of the concrete blocks that make up the memorial for the murdered Jews only steps away hidden from view behind the vegetation of the Tiergarten. Artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, winners of the call for proposals, deliberately ‘borrowed’ the plain design of the cube from the black steles of the Holocaust memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe. They picked up on the design of the holocaust memorial but supplemented it with an

additional element: “In a small window a kissing-scene can be seen. The memorial is supposed to honor the victims of National Socialism while setting ‘a permanent symbol against intolerance, hostility and ostracism of gays and lesbians’” (“Denkmal für die Verfolgten Homosexuellen”).<sup>19</sup> The cube is thus infused with meaning from the memorial



Figure 5.3: ‘Homomonument’. Monument for the Homosexual Victims of the Holocaust. Tiergartent Park, Berlin.  
Meusen, Isabel. *Homosexuellenmahnmal Berlin*. 2014. Photograph. Private Collection, n.p.

to the Jews, representing violence, suffering and killing. At the same time, however, it beckons to be perceived as the anonymous block it was designed to be, allowing only a voyeuristic view inside like that of a Peeping Tom. The video screen behind the glass, originally installed to show an endless-loop of two men kissing, is the only hint as to what the monument is to memorialize. Lesbians did not show up in the original concept of the design and only after public protest and debate – as has been summarized in the introduction – did the artists and the endowment foundation agree to change the video every two years and include kissing women in the installation as well. In its design the

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<sup>19</sup> “Die Künstler haben dabei die Formensprache des Holocaustdenkmals aufgegriffen und durch ein zusätzliches Element ergänzt: In einer Fensteröffnung ist ein Film mit einer Kuss-Szene zu betrachten. Das Denkmal soll die homosexuellen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus ehren und zugleich ‘ein beständiges Zeichen gegen Intoleranz, Feindseligkeit und Ausgrenzung gegenüber Schwulen und Lesben setzen’”.

memorial is an ambiguous structure of angular masculine massiveness and nondescript monstrosity, making it the symbol of ‘machismo’ the artists were striving for. Lesbian women, though explicitly included in the call for proposals and apparently meant to be integrated in the memorial, cannot be found in the design of the memorial and were not planned as part of the original video installation either. On the contrary, in an open letter denying the accusations of *EMMA* editor Alice Schwarzer to have constructed a monument solely for the gay victims of the National Socialists they claim lesbians will find themselves in their interpretation (cf. *Denkmal Verfolgten Homosexuellen*). Law professor Monika Frommel disagrees with the idea of lesbian persecution from the start, saying that “to be ignored like lesbian women were by the Nazis may hurt but isn’t a tragedy – and certainly no persecution. The monument should only be dedicated to gay men” (*Denkmal Verfolgten Homosexuellen*).<sup>20</sup>

In the inscription on the two commemorative plaques lesbians are mentioned but their suffering and possible persecution is diminished for the benefit of homosexual men: “The Nazis smashed the living environments of gays and lesbians. Female homosexuality was not prosecuted under criminal law except in annexed Austria. Lesbians were not seen as a threat to the Nazis. If lesbian women did get into trouble with the regime they, too, were subject to repressions. Gays and lesbians were intimidated and lived in constant necessity of deception” (Berlin).<sup>21</sup> It stands to reason to wonder what the difference is

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<sup>20</sup> “Ignoriert zu werden, wie die lesbischen Frauen durch die Nationalsozialisten, mag kränkend sein, ist aber keine Tragödie – und erst recht keine Verfolgung. Das Mahnmal sollte nur den schwulen Männern gewidmet sein.”

<sup>21</sup> “Die Nationalsozialisten haben die Lebenswelten von Schwulen und Lesben zerschlagen. Weibliche Homosexualität wurde – außer im annektierten Österreich – nicht

between the written word and the moving picture. Do pictures say more than a thousand words? Berlin is, admittedly, the only memorial with a continuous moving picture installation as part of its memorial for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust. Cologne and Frankfurt, the other two memorials analyzed in this dissertation, included lesbian women with little or no opposition from political or private parties as part of their commemorative plaques. None of them garnered the kind of public attention in 1994 and 1995, respectively, that gripped the lesbian and gay movement in 2008 for the unveiling of the monument in Berlin. Comparing the original proposal by the Bundestag from 2003 and the final inscription of the memorial in 2008, however, it becomes clear that recognition of lesbian persecution suffered a blow. While the last words of the inscription imply the memorial to be “a permanent symbol against intolerance, animosity and ostracism against *gays and lesbians*” (emphasis added), the reality of the protests surrounding the memorial itself and the previous negating sentences about lesbian persecution in particular show how deeply rooted the idea still is that only gay men were persecuted by the Nazis. To be sure, one cannot compare the suffering of gays with that of lesbians, but as with any other victim group one cannot and should not create a hierarchy of suffering. The Berlin memorial, with its exclusiveness to the memory of gay men while only laterally acknowledging the situation of lesbians during National Socialism created a stir, I contend, because of the inconsistencies from the conception of the idea to the actual realization of the memorial. The definition of persecution – what counts, what does not count, what may be counted under certain circumstances – would

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strafrechtlich verfolgt. Sie galt den Nationalsozialisten als weniger bedrohlich. Gerieten lesbische Frauen dennoch in Konflikt mit dem Regime, waren auch sie Repressionen ausgesetzt. Schwule und Lesben lebten im Nationalsozialismus eingeschüchtert und unter stetem Zwang zur Tarnung”.

have to be evaluated again to make a valid argument for the exclusion of lesbians from a monument for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust. Monika Frommel's earlier statement that to be ignored as lesbian is a tragedy but does not count as persecution negates the reality of what it means to be ignored and subsumed under the umbrella of 'women.' It assumes that passing as a heterosexual woman was nothing more than an inconvenience for lesbian women, begging the question as to why gay men could not or would not have played the heterosexual husband just as well.<sup>22</sup> With the threat of §175 hanging over their heads gays should have been acutely aware that their lives were in danger and that male privilege was only part of the Nazi ideology for those who belonged. Monika Frommel shifts the blame from the perpetrators to the victims in denying lesbians recognition as having been persecuted by the Nazis. The inscription on the monument in Berlin carved in stone the representation of lesbians as tragic but negligible casualties of the extermination policies of the National Socialists.

In sharp contrast to the monuments realized in Cologne and Frankfurt, where lesbian persecution is recognized in writing in both inscriptions without any negation or limitation, Berlin recognizes and minimizes lesbian persecution at the same time. The fact that lesbian women were persecuted under Nazism should be enough to count them as victims of the Holocaust even if the exact nature of their suffering cannot be estimated. While the memorial in Frankfurt is also inclusive of male and female homosexual victims in location and design of the memorial, in Cologne only the inscription can be fully

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<sup>22</sup> Frommel's argument can also easily be turned against homosexual men, questioning why they did not simply pass as heterosexual men in a heterosexual marriage and played their role as heterosexuals males. Why did they not dress differently, act differently, and simply *be* different to pass as heterosexuals?



counted as a positive affirmation of lesbian persecution. The use of the pink triangle as a marker of homosexual concentration camp prisoners and the location at a former cruising spot for gay men limits the lesbian association with the memorial to its plaque, which nevertheless explicitly differentiates between the victims that were silenced and those that were killed.

I argue that Cologne's differentiation between 'silenced' and 'killed' is a good indicator of how to understand persecution of gays and lesbians. Silencing and killing both lead to a – metaphorical and real – hole in the fabric of memory, (her-/his-)stories that cannot be told. Persecution is the disruption that creates these holes, intended to kill and destroy a group of people and their memory. Thus, the unveiling of the memorials that happened quietly in Cologne and Frankfurt because the differences in the victims' persecution were acknowledged, drew protests in Berlin due to the attempt of creating another hierarchy of suffering.

In comparison with the written and filmic analysis, memorials are different due to the unique needs they serve. Their function as public places of remembrance, celebration, or mourning means political and social agendas are involved and shape how they are perceived. Likewise, processes to be set in motion in the viewer differ from the effect a book or a film are intended to have. A work of art does not need to acquiring meaning or justification for its existence through political or private intervention. Where art – in writing, cinematography, or sculpture – is free to express an individual's interpretation of events, memorials need to live up to the expectation of representing a historical 'truth.' Art is therefore free to cater to an audience receptive to the interpretation of the author, whereas memorials are intended to reflect a more broadly accepted view. The limitations

imposed on memorials is not applicable for literary representations, thus making the texts analyzed in this study examples of a different kind of historical authenticity or truth.

Where memorials cannot transgress the boundaries set by their status as reflections of history, art opens up a space of interpretation virtually free of these limitations. For the representation of lesbian persecution I would thus contend that the public memorials previously described enhance the gap of visibility between lesbian and gay victims of the Holocaust.

## **Chapter 6 – Conclusion**

The emphasis of this dissertation has been to explore lesbian persecution during the Holocaust as it is represented in various forms of narratives. I have argued that lesbian persecution disappears at the intersection of persecution related to other personality traits, such as political ideology, religious belief, or class. Sexual identity is essentially overlaid by the category of ‘woman’, a categorization that made females vulnerable to victimization based on the National Socialists beliefs about gender roles. In addition to that, ‘woman’ in narratives with lesbian love stories set during the Holocaust is further subsumed under the classification of ‘Jewish woman.’ As my analysis has shown, religious persecution and discrimination based on sexual identity are thus conflated to overshadow each other: a reading as either Jewish or lesbian suffering is rejected in favor of the novelty of a lesbian love story. Persecution of the Jewish partner is utilized and skewed to represent persecution against a lesbian couple.

Debates about the meaning and scale of persecution are at the heart of arguments about exclusion and inclusion of lesbians as victims of National Socialist politics. The analysis of representations of lesbian persecution completed in this dissertation brought to light several difficulties connected to finding and recognizing representation of lesbian persecution during the Holocaust today. The first and basic problem was finding a shared definition for what counts as and constitutes persecution versus discrimination. As my analysis has shown, it is in the absence of one final and definite classification that lesbian

persecution and suffering are debated. Secondly, it was problematic to settle on whom to identify as lesbian and conversely distinguish where lesbian persecution was taking place in those narratives, which were not biographical. As I pointed out in my analysis of *Verbotene Verhältnisse*, one kiss, touch or sexual intimate act with a woman does not make one a lesbian. Delineating ‘lesbian’ as a sexual identity, however, and in the absence of personal statements to prove otherwise, the distinguishing sign of visibility for the analysis was physical contact between women. The third difficulty presented itself in the analysis of the current dialogue regarding the representation of lesbian persecution and its recognition in varying factions. Originating in the discourse of individual and collective memory of the Holocaust, lesbian persecution is ignored, moderated, or denied, to name but a few opinions. The participant’s views and understandings of lesbian life during the Holocaust are influenced depending on the collective memory they share. As a non-heteronormative sexual identity, lesbians are still not readily accepted in all cultures and societies. Thus they do not only vanish by being incorporated into other victim groups but also by not being recognized as lesbians, they furthermore remain invisible under the sign ‘woman.’

This brings me to the challenge of how lesbian women were represented during the Holocaust, how they saw themselves and how they were persecuted. In my analysis of biographical narratives it became clear that the National Socialist feminist ideology played a big part in how the women acted and reacted to their surroundings. Dressing ‘feminine’ to fit in versus daring to stand out and risk being charged by the police as ‘asocial’ and receiving a ticket to Ravensbrück; staying away from clubs and old friends for fear of being picked up or taking the chance of a fictitious marriage; the permutations

of possibilities are endless but the common denominator was fear. This fear is expressed across the board and though the women act it out differently they are all driven by the motivation to stay alive and – in some cases – keep those they hide alive. The persecution they are subjected to is expressed mostly in chauvinist behavior. Hilde Radusch, who loses her job after she refuses to send her girlfriend to her boss, or ‘Johnny’, who is fired after she reprimands her superior for groping her, are examples for this. In both instances neither woman behaved in the subordinate manner prescribed by the Nazis and expected by men in higher positions. The expected availability and subordination of women is, for the most part, not applicable to the lesbians in *Days of Masquerade* and *Verbotene Verhältnisse*. In the experience of being different and within the process of identity formation they have to define boundaries against those who ask “Aren’t you ashamed of this?” (Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* 118). It comes across as a progression that leaves them less vulnerable in the end. The persecution they are subjected to by the Nazis is compartmentalized as something that cannot be changed but has to be endured. Much like the taunting, ridicule and self-doubts of the previous coming-of-age and coming out process, the interviewed lesbian women state matter-of-factly what happened and how they reacted. They describe the fear and the psychological damage they still suffer.

The movies *Aimée & Jaguar* and *Novembermond*, though both superficially about relationships between women, show persecutions of Jewish women, not lesbian women. Felice and November are Jewish and persecuted as Jews, and their lesbian identity – if it exists at all – is invisible and can only be inferred from the sexual acts that are shown. In the analysis of *Aimée & Jaguar* I claim that the lesbian love-story is only a means to an end to show the persecution of Felice, the Jew. I argue that the ‘love’ between Felice and

Lilly cannot and would not work if Felice were a German. The tension of the movie is accomplished through the power differential in the relationship between Lilly and Felice. The persecution that is shown, however, is always persecution against Felice as a Jew but never against Lilly or Lilly and Felice. Thus the aspect of lesbian persecution is irrelevant and invisible, it disappears behind the imminent danger Felice is in as a Jew and the persecution she endures as a Jew. Her death is not the death of a lesbian but the death of a Jewish woman who lived with and had sexual relationships with other women.

*Novembermond* operates on a similar assumption of lesbian persecution, although here the lesbian undertones are subtler. An argument, which I believe to be central in understanding the representation of November as Jewish persecution and not lesbian persecution, is the tattoo of the word 'Jew' she is given during the stay at the brothel. Everything that marked her as Jewish is taken away from her character as soon as she is on the run and when she is hiding with Ferial. She is still branded as a Jew, though, by the tattoo and it is included in various shots when her fear from detection becomes visible. Thus both movies, while telling the stories about two women in a relationship and possibly even being in love, are not about lesbian persecution but about the persecution of Jewish women who may have been lesbians.

The findings from my analysis have to be revisited in order to further understand the implications of the way lesbian persecution and its representation influences the perception of lesbian life – and lesbians as victims – during the Holocaust. Few historians, among them Claudia Schoppmann and Ilse Kokula on whose works I have relied extensively, have undertaken the task of researching lesbian life and lesbian persecution during the Holocaust. Literary analysis of Holocaust memoirs mentioning

lesbians has thus far been limited to memoirs of female concentration camp survivors. In these memoirs lesbian behavior is described negatively, the fellow inmates see lesbian sexual acts between women as a power relationship. Kerstin Meier published an essay in 1999 focusing on Ravensbrück and Auschwitz concentration camp. More scholarly research centering on the thousands of unpublished memoirs by female survivors of the Holocaust could shed more light on lesbian life. The attempts by Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and other museums and archives to collect and translate survivor accounts indicate that there is material to work with.

The limitation of this dissertation to include only publications dealing with Germany and Austria is a starting point for further research. A focus on fiction narratives or pulp fiction may add different conclusions, although I will make an educated guess at this point and conjecture that Jewishness and lesbianism will go hand-in-hand there as well. Another especially fruitful comparative analysis approach I see is the study of Holocaust memorials for homosexual victims. Presenting at once the perception of lesbian persecution as well as the representation of it in the design of the memorial site, it would be interesting to explore how the Holocaust is viewed and commemorated in countries other than Germany. One problem I see important to address in the future is the question of lesbians as German perpetrators. For this to be possible, though, it would be necessary to identify lesbian German perpetrators first, the chances of which seem relatively slim at the present moment, in part because women as perpetrators do not fit the image of women as the innocent nurturers during the third Reich, in part because the denominator 'lesbian' fades in the background behind the label of Germaneness.

Finally, there will have to be a shift in the understanding of lesbian identity as its own category within the box labeled 'homosexuality' before lesbian persecution will be recognized as such. Lesbian persecution as it was represented in the texts I analyzed did not represent persecution against lesbians but women persecuted as something else who also happened to be lesbians. As long as homosexuality is the main category and mainly equated with 'gay men', lesbians will be implicitly included and excluded at the same time. I propose that a change from thinking about the 'lesbian victims of the Holocaust' to 'the lesbian women among the victims of National Socialism' may be a first step in the direction of changing the discourse of the homosexual victims of Nazism.



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